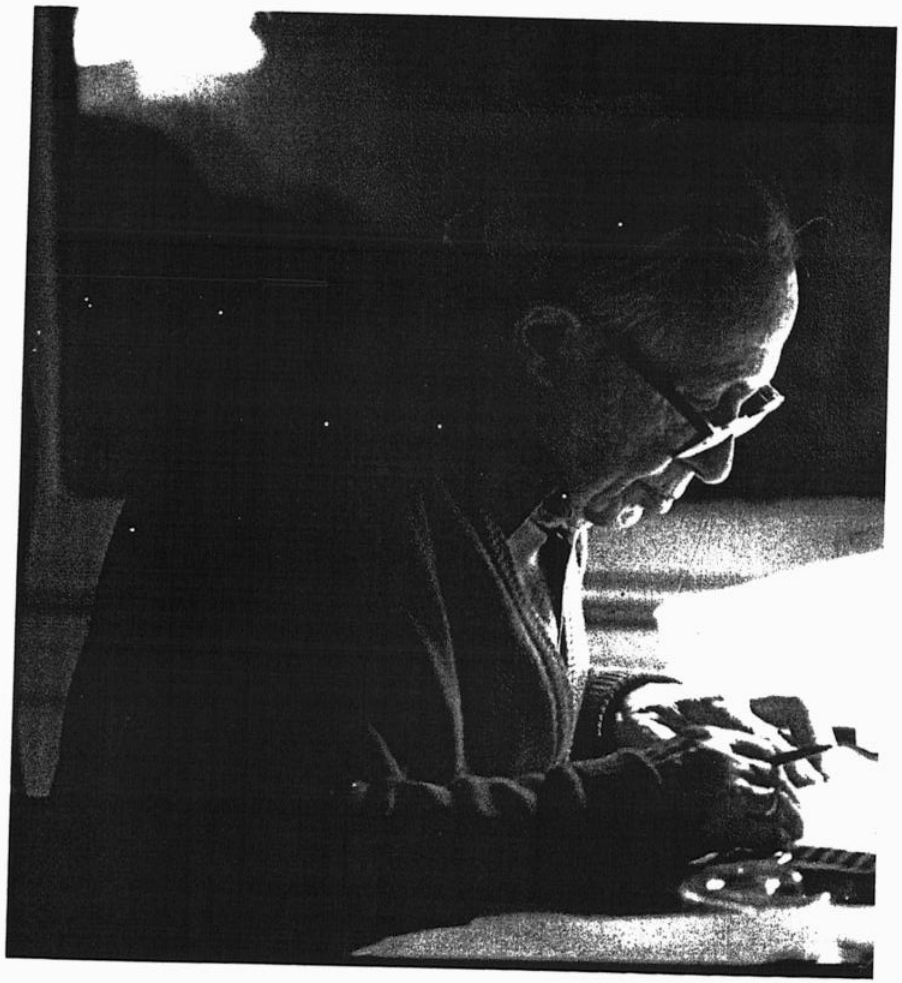

Hans Jonas

The Legacy of Hans Jonas

Judaism and the Phenomenon of Life

Edited by

Hava Tirosh-Samuelson and Christian Wiese

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To Lore Jonas,
who has shared Jonas's life
and helped perpetuate his legacy.

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CONTRIBUTORS

Kalman P. Bland (Ph.D., 1972, Brandeis University) is professor of religion at Duke University. His major fields of research and teaching are medieval and modern Jewish intellectual history. He is the editor and translator of *The Epistle on the Possibility of Conjunction with the Active Intellect by Ibn Rushd with the Commentary by Moses Narboni: A Critical Edition and Annotated Translation* (1982), and the author of *The Artless Jew: Medieval and Modern Affirmations and Denials of the Visual* (2002), as well as of numerous articles and reviews on Jewish intellectual history.

Micha Brumlik (Ph.D., 1977, University of Frankfurt am Main) is professor of philosophy at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität in Frankfurt am Main. He specializes in German-Jewish history and from 2000 to 2005 was the director of the Fritz Bauer Institute for the Study and Documentation of the History of the Holocaust. He is the author of *Die Gnostiker* (1992); *Schrift, Wort, und Ikone: Wege aus dem Verbot der Bilder* (1994); *Kein Weg als Deutscher und Jude: Eine bundesrepublikanische Erfahrung* (1996); *Vernunft und Offenbarung: Religionsphilosophische Versuche* (2000); *Deutscher Geist und Judenhass: Das Verhältnis des philosophischen Idealismus zum Judentum* (2000); *Bildung und Glück: Versuch einer Theorie der Tugenden* (2002); *Aus Katastrophen lernen: Grundlagen zeitgeschichtlicher Bildung in menschenrechtlicher Absicht* (2004); and *Sigmund Freud: Der Denker des 20. Jahrhunderts* (2006).

Strachan Donnelley (Ph.D., 1977, New School for Social Research) is the president of the Center for Humans and Nature, which he founded in 2003. Previously, he was president of The Hastings Center (a bioethics institute) and director of its Humans and Nature Program. Besides numerous published articles in philosophy and applied ethics, Donnelley has co-edited and written for three special supplements to the *Hastings Center Report*: "Animals, Science and Ethics" (1990), "The Brave New World of Animal Biotechnology" (1994), and "Nature, Polis, Ethics: Chicago Regional Planning" (November–December 1999). He also edited a special edition of the *Hastings Center Report* in 1995 on Hans Jonas. Recently he has written several articles on philosophy, evolutionary biology, and ethical responsibility.

Frederick Ferré (Ph.D., 1959, University of St. Andrews, Scotland) is professor emeritus of philosophy at the University of Georgia and Dickinson College. He is the author and editor of twenty-one books, including *Language, Logic, and God* (1961); *Basic Modern Philosophy of Religion* (1967); *Shaping the Future: Resources for the Post-Modern World* (1976); *Philosophy of Technology* (1988); *Hellfire and Lightning Rods: Liberating Science, Technology, and Religion* (1993); *Knowing and Value: Toward a Constructive Postmodern Epistemology* (1998); and *Living and Value: Toward a Constructive Postmodern Ethic* (2001).

Vittorio Hösle (Ph.D., 1982, University of Tübingen) is Paul Kimball Professor of Arts and Letters in the Department of German and Russian Languages and Literatures and professor of philosophy and of political science at Notre Dame University. His scholarly interests are in the areas of systematic philosophy and history of philosophy. He is the author and editor of twenty-eight books, among them *Wahrheit und Geschichte: Studien zur Struktur der Philosophiegeschichte unter paradigmatischer Analyse der Entwicklung von Parmenides bis Platon* (1984); *Hegels System: Der Idealismus der Subjektivität und das Problem der Intersubjektivität* (1988); *Die Krise der Gegenwart und die Verantwortung der Philosophie: Transzendentalpragmatik, Letztbegründung, Ethik* (1990); *Philosophie der ökologischen Krise* (1991); *Philosophiegeschichte und objektiver Idealismus* (1996); *Die Philosophie und die Wissenschaften* (1999); *Philosophie und Öffentlichkeit* (2003); *Platon interpretieren* (2004); and *Der Philosophische Dialog* (2006).

William R. Lafleur (Ph.D., 1973, University of Chicago) is the E. Dale Saunders Professor in Japanese Studies in the Department of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. He is the author of *The Karma of Words: Buddhism and the Literary Arts in Medieval Japan* (1986); *Buddhism: A Cultural Perspective* (1988); *Liquid Life: Abortion and Buddhism in Japan* (1992), which was also published in Japanese; and *Awesome Nightfall: The Life, Times, and Poetry of Saigyô* (2003). He edited *Zen and Western Thought: Essays by Masao Abe* (1985), which received a prize from the American Academy of Religion, and *Dôgen Studies* (1985). He is the principal editor, along with Gernot Böhme and Susumu Shimazono, of *Dark Medicine: Rationalizing Unethical Medical Research* (2007).

Benjamin Lazier (Ph.D., 2002, University of California, Berkeley) is assistant professor of history and humanities at Reed College in Oregon and has held fellowships at the Stanford Humanities Center, the

University of Chicago, the University of Freiburg, and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His essays have appeared in the *Journal of the History of Ideas* and in *New German Critique*, and his book *Redemption through Sin: Judaism and Heresy in Twentieth-Century Thought* will be published by Princeton University Press.

Konrad Paul Liessmann (Ph.D., 1979, University of Vienna) is professor of philosophy at the University of Vienna, and an essayist, literary critic, and cultural commentator. He is the author of *Ästhetik der Verführung: Kierkegaards Konstruktion der Erotik aus dem Geiste der Kunst* (1991); *Ohne Mitleid: Zum Begriff der Distanz als ästhetische Kategorie mit ständiger Rücksicht auf Theodor W. Adorno* (1991); *Karl Marx *1818 + 1989: Man stirbt nur zweimal* (1992); *Kierkegaard: Zur Einführung* (1993); *Philosophie der modernen Kunst* (1993); *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil des Denkens für das Leben: Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Philosophie* (1997); *Die großen Philosophen und ihre Probleme: Vorlesungen zur Einführung in die Philosophie* (1998); *Günther Anders: Philosophie im Zeitalter der technologischen Revolutionen* (2002); *Reiz und Rührung: Über ästhetische Empfindungen* (2003); *Spähtrupp im Niemandsland: Kulturphilosophische Erkundungen* (2004); *Die Insel der Seligen: Österreichische Erinnerungen* (2005); and *Theorie der Unbildung: Die Irrtümer der Wissensgesellschaft* (2006).

Michael Löwy (Ph.D., 1964, University of Paris) is research director in sociology at the National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS) in Paris. He is an anthropologist, lawyer, and mediator who has written widely on political philosophy and intellectual history. An eco-socialist, he composed the *Ecosocialist Manifesto* in 2001. Among his many books are *The Marxism of Che Guevara: Philosophy, Economics, and Revolutionary Warfare* (1986); *On Changing the World: Essays in Political Philosophy, from Karl Marx to Walter Benjamin* (1992); *Redemption and Utopia: Jewish Libertarian Thought in Central Europe: A Study in Elective Affinity* (with Hope Heaney) (1992).

Sandra B. Lubarsky (Ph.D., 1986, Claremont Graduate University) is professor of religious studies and director of the Master of Liberal Studies on Sustainable Communities program at Northern Arizona University. She is the author of *Tolerance and Transformation: Jewish Approaches to Religious Pluralism* (1990), the co-editor of *Jewish Theology and Process Thought* (with David Ray Griffin) (1996) and of *9/11 & American Empire: Christians, Jews, and Muslims Speak Out* (with Kevin Barrett and John B. Cobb) (2006), and has written numerous essays on Jewish process theology.

Ron Margolin (Ph.D., 2000, Hebrew University of Jerusalem) is senior lecturer at Tel Aviv University as well as a research fellow at the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem. He is the author of *The Human Temple: Religious Interiorization and the Structuring of Inner Life in Early Hasidism* [in Hebrew] (2004), and the editor of *Israel as Jewish and Democratic State* [in Hebrew] (1999); *The Bible and Its World: Proceedings of the 12th World Congress of Jewish Studies, Division A* [in Hebrew and English] (1999); and *Jewish History: Proceedings of the 12th World Congress of Jewish Studies, Division A* [in Hebrew and English] (2000).

Carl Mitcham (Ph.D., 1988, Fordham University) is Professor of Liberal Arts and International Studies at the Colorado School of Mines. A leading American philosopher of technology with an emphasis on ethics, he is the author of *Thinking Through Technology: The Path between Engineering and Philosophy* (1994) and co-author of *Engineer's Toolkit: Engineering Ethics* (with R. Shanon Duval) (2000). He is the editor of *Encyclopedia of Science, Technology and Ethics* (2005) and editor or co-editor of several volumes including *Social and Philosophical Constructions of Technology* (1995), and *The Empirical Turn in the Philosophy of Technology* (with Peter Kroes and Anthonie Meijers) (2001).

Robert Cummings Neville (Ph.D., 1963, Yale University) is professor of philosophy, religion, and theology, dean emeritus of the School of Theology, and Dean of Marsh Chapel and Chaplain of the University at Boston University. His research encompasses metaphysics, philosophy of religion, philosophical theology, ethics, political theory, American philosophy, modern philosophy, and comparative philosophy. He is the author and editor of thirty-one books; among his authored books are *God the Creator: On the Transcendence and Presence of God* (1968; 1992); *The Cosmology of Freedom* (1974; 1995); *Creativity and God: A Challenge to Process Theology* (1980; 1995); *Behind the Mask of God* (1991); *The Highroad around Modernity* (1992); *Normative Cultures* (1995); *The Tao and the Daimon: Segments of Religious Inquiry* (1982); *Religion in Late Modernity* (2002); and *Preaching the Gospel without Easy Answers* (2005).

Bernard G. Prusak (Ph.D., 2003, Boston University) is the Lawrence C. Gallen Teaching Fellow in the Humanities at Villanova University. He specializes in ethics, philosophical anthropology, and social philosophy: his dissertation focuses on twentieth-century German philosophical anthropology. He has published parts of his dissertation in the *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* and the *Continental Philosophy Review*, and other articles in the *Hastings Center Report*, *The American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, and *Social Philosophy Today*. Two of his articles have been translated into Czech and Hungarian. He is also a regular contributor to the magazine *Commonweal*.

Kurt Rudolph (Th.D., 1956, Ph.D., 1957, University of Leipzig; D.D., University of St. Andrews, 1983; Ph.D. h.c., 1998 University of Aahus; Ph.D. h.c., 1995; University of Leipzig) is since 1996 an emeritus professor of history of religions at the Philipps-University of Marburg, who has also taught at the University of Leipzig (1961–1984), the University of Chicago, Harvard University, and the University of California, Santa Barbara (1984–1986). He is the author of *Die Mandäer I—Das Mandäerproblem* (1960); *Die Mandäer II—Der Kult* (1961); *Theogonie, Kosmogonie, und Anthropogonie in den mandäischen Schriften* (1965); *Die Gnosis—Wesen und Geschichte einer spätantiken Religion* (1977, 4th ed. 2005, ET 1983); *Geschichte und Probleme der Religionswissenschaft* (1992); and *Gnosis und spätantike Religionsgeschichte* (1997).

Hava Tirosh-Samuelson (Ph.D., 1978, Hebrew University of Jerusalem) is professor of history, director of Jewish Studies, and Irving and Miriam Lowe Chair in Modern Judaism at Arizona State University. She is the author of *Between Worlds: The Life and Thought of Rabbi David ben Judah Messer Leon* (1991) and *Happiness in Premodern Judaism: Virtue, Knowledge, and Well-Being* (2003) in addition to numerous essays and book chapters about Jewish intellectual history. She is also the editor of *Judaism and Ecology: Created World and Revealed Word* (2002) and *Women and Gender in Jewish Philosophy* (2004). She conceptualized, organized and managed the conference on Jonas at Arizona State University in 2005.

Lawrence Troster (Rabbinic Ordination, 1982, Jewish Theological Seminary) is the Jewish Chaplain of Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson and an associate of Bard's Institute of Advanced Theology. He is also the director of the Fellowship program for GreenFaith: Interfaith Partners in Action for the Earth in New Jersey, and was the Rabbinic Fellow of the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life (COEJL). He serves as co-chair of the Interfaith Partnership for the Environment of UNEP (United Nations Environment Program) and is a member of

the editorial boards of *Conservative Judaism and Judaism* and a member of the board of directors of *CrossCurrents*. His essays on interfaith relations, Jewish environmentalism, bioethics, and Judaism and modern cosmology have appeared in *Conservative Judaism*, *Judaism*, *Sh'ma*, *Environmental Practice: A Journal of the National Association of Environmental Professionals*, *Proceedings of the Rabbinic Assembly*, *The Reconstructionist*, *Ecumenism*, *Viewpoints*, and several edited volumes.

Lawrence Vogel (Ph.D., 1989, Yale University) is professor of philosophy and chair of the Philosophy Department at Connecticut College, where he specializes in ethics, applied ethics, phenomenology, and existentialism. He is the author of *The Fragile "We": Ethical Implications of Heidegger's Being and Time* (1994), and the editor of a volume of Hans Jonas's later essays: *Mortality and Morality: A Search for the Good after Auschwitz* (1996). He has recently been a Hannah Arendt Lecturer at the New School in New York and Sharpe Lecturer at the University of Chicago, and his essays on Heidegger's Jewish students—especially Hans Jonas, Emmanuel Levinas, Leo Strauss, and Hannah Arendt—appeared in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, *The Graduate Faculty Journal of the New School*, and the *Hastings Center Report*.

Steven M. Wasserstrom (Ph.D., 1985, University of Toronto) is the Moe and Izetta Tonkon Professor of Judaic Studies and Humanities at Reed College. He is the author of the award-winning book, *Between Muslim and Jew: The Problem of Symbiosis* (1995), and *Religion after Religion: Gershom Scholem, Mircea Eliade, and Henry Corbin at Eranos* (1999). He is the editor of *"The Fullness of Time": Poems of Gershom Scholem* (translated by Richard Sieburth) (2003) and the author of a forthcoming book, *Concubines and Puppies: New and Old in the History of Religions*.

Micha H. Werner (Ph.D., 1993, Free University of Berlin) is universitair docent for Practical Philosophy at Utrecht University in The Netherlands. His research focuses on transcendental philosophy, action theory, and bioethics. He is the co-author (with Marcus Düwell and Christoph Hübenthal) of *Handbuch Ethik* (2003; 2nd ed. 2006), and author of *Diskursethik als Maximenethik: Von der Prinzipienbegründung zur Handlungsorientierung* (2003), and *Krankheitsbegriff und Mittelverteilung* (2004).

Christian Wiese (Ph.D., 1997, University of Frankfurt am Main) is professor of Jewish history and director of the Centre for German-Jewish

Studies at the University of Sussex, United Kingdom. Previously he held positions at Duisburg University and the University of Erfurt and has been a visiting faculty member at McGill University (Montreal), Dartmouth College, and Trinity College (Dublin). He is the author of *Challenging Colonial Discourse: Jewish Studies and Protestant Theology in Wilhelmine Germany* (2005) and *The Life and Thought of Hans Jonas: Jewish Dimensions* (2007), and the editor of Hans Jonas's *Erinnerungen* (2003) as well as of *Redefining Judaism in an Age of Emancipation: Comparative Perspectives on Samuel Holdheim, 1806–1860* (2006); he has also co-edited *Weiterwohnlichkeit der Welt: Zur Aktualität von Hans Jonas* (2003) and *Modern Judaism and Historical Consciousness: Identities–Encounters–Perspectives* (2007).

Richard Wolin (Ph.D., 1980, York University, Toronto) is Distinguished Professor of History at the City University of New York Graduate Center. He is the author of *Walter Benjamin: An Aesthetic of Redemption* (1982); *The Politics of Being: The Political Thought of Martin Heidegger* (1990); *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader* (1991); *The Terms of Cultural Criticism: The Frankfurt School, Existentialism, Poststructuralism* (1992); *Labyrinth: Explorations in the Critical History of Ideas* (1995); *Heidegger's Children: Hannah Arendt, Karl Löwith, Hans Jonas, and Herbert Marcuse* (2001); *The Seduction of Unreason: The Intellectual Romance with Fascism from Nietzsche to Postmodernism* (2004); and *The Frankfurt School Revisited and Other Essays on Politics and Society* (2006).

Martin D. Yaffe (Ph.D., 1968, Claremont Graduate University) is professor of philosophy and religious studies at the University of North Texas-Denton. His research interests are in political philosophy and Jewish thought. He is author of *Shylock and the Jewish Questions* (1997), co-translator of *Thomas Aquinas' Literal Exposition on the Book of Job* (1989), editor of *Judaism and Environmental Ethics: A Reader* (2001), translator of Benedict Spinoza's *Theologico-Political Treatise* (2004), and co-editor of *Emil Fackenheim—Philosopher, Theologian, Jew: A Collection of Critical Essays* (2007). He is currently completing a translation from the German, with notes and interpretative essay, of Leo Strauss's essays on Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786), originally contained in the Jubilee Edition of Mendelssohn's writings, of which Strauss (1899–1973) was the co-editor.

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Several people were involved directly in the production of the book. We are most grateful to Margret Vince of Nottingham, England, who translated the German essays into English and made sure to render

[1] The essays by Micha Brumlik, Vittorio Hösle, Kurt Rudolph, Konrad Paul Liessmann, and Michael Löwy, and one of the essays by Christian Wiese (albeit in a much shorter version), appeared in the volume *Weiterwohnlichkeit der Welt: Zur Aktualität von Hans Jonas*, ed. Christian Wiese and Eric Jacobson (Berlin: Philo-Verlag, 2003).

difficult philosophical concepts in accessible English. Meeting Margret in England, while I was on sabbatical at Oxford University, was a special treat for me. We are also deeply indebted to Mary Egel, who worked on the manuscript and prepared the bibliography and the index. Her copious attention to detail made the work on this large and complicated project much more enjoyable. Our publisher at Brill, Michiel Klein Swormink, has been with the project from the very beginning, since he attended the conference at ASU. His excellent management, sound judgment, and dedication to the project made it possible for us to bring Jonas to the attention of a large reading public. Working with Michiel has been a pleasure.

Finally, we wish to thank Mrs. Lore Jonas for her interest in the project and her determination to make the work of her husband, Hans Jonas, better known in the U.S. Mrs. Jonas was an active participant in the conference proceedings and kept us informed about ongoing work about Jonas in Europe, encouraging us to bring this volume to press in a timely fashion. The photograph of Hans Jonas at the beginning of the volume was given by the Jonas family as a token of thanks for the conference and we are delighted to have it grace this volume. We dedicate the book to Mrs. Jonas with appreciation and admiration.

PREFACE

UNDERSTANDING JONAS: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY PROJECT

Hava Tirosh-Samuelson

Hans Jonas (1903–1993) was one of the most original, insightful, and prescient Jewish thinkers of the twentieth century.[1] Born in Mönchengladbach, he began his philosophical studies in 1921 as a student at the Berlin Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums (University for the Science of Judaism) and studied philosophy at Marburg University with the most influential philosopher of the twentieth century, Martin Heidegger. Like other Jewish students of Heidegger (e.g., Karl Löwith and Hannah Arendt),[2] Jonas had to leave Germany with the rise of Nazism, with which Heidegger fully cooperated as the rector of Freiburg University in 1933. Also like other Jewish intellectuals who fled Nazi Germany, Jonas found his way to the New School for Social Research in New York, where he taught from 1955 until 1976. However, unlike other Jewish students of Heidegger, Jonas lived for a while in Palestine (1934–1942; 1947–1949) and remained interested in Jewish theology until the end of his life. In 1939 Jonas enlisted in the Jewish Brigade of the British army and participated in the Italian campaign of 1943. He indeed returned to Germany "as a victor," as he vowed to himself in 1933, but there he had to confront the death of his mother in Auschwitz and the destruction of Jewish life and culture throughout Europe. Soon after he had been reunited with his family in Palestine in 1945, the War of Independence broke out and Jonas once again

[1] A full biography is provided by Christian Wiese, *Hans Jonas: "Zusammen Philosoph und Jude"* (Frankfurt am Main: Jüdischer Verlag, 2003). The work is now available in an expanded English version under the title *The Life and Thought of Hans Jonas: Jewish Dimensions* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2007). Wiese is also the editor of Jonas's memoirs, *Erinnerungen* (Frankfurt: Insel, 2003), which will also be published in English by Brandeis University Press.

[2] A rich and detailed treatment of Jonas and other Jewish students of Heidegger is available in Richard Wolin, *Heidegger's Children: Hannah Arendt, Karl Löwith, Hans Jonas, and Herbert Marcuse* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 101–33.

volunteered to serve in combat in the service of the nascent State of Israel. The war experience profoundly transformed his outlook on life and his academic commitments.

Jonas, who wrote a path-breaking study on Gnosticism,[3] shifted his focus from philosophy and history of religions to philosophy of biology and to bioethics, extending his existential philosophy and phenomenological analysis to include all forms of life.[4] Unique among twentieth-century Jewish philosophers, Jonas argued for the possibility of a genuinely symbiotic relationship between humanity and nature, which he believed had been suppressed by modern technology. Taking his inspiration from Jewish sources, especially the Bible and Lurianic Kabbalah,[5] Jonas spoke against the human domination of nature, and he was among the first to articulate the ethical challenges that modern technology poses to humanity. Jonas was critical of genetic engineering and cloning because he believed that life itself has the capacity for moral responsibility, and because he considered the very emergence of life as an "ontological revolution in the history of matter."[6] He was among a handful of Jewish philosophers to systematically incorporate evolutionary biology into his philosophical and ethical reflections.[7]

[3] Hans Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*. Part 1: *Die mythologische Gnosis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1934); Part 2: *Von der Mythologie zur mystischen Philosophie* (Göttingen:Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1954). The English volume *The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginning of Christianity* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958; rev. ed., 1963) is a much shorter representation of Gnosticism, stripped of most of the German version's Heideggerian language and supplemented by some later essays on the relationship between Gnosticism, nihilism, and existentialism.

[4] Jonas's most well-known works on these topics in English are *The Phenomenon of Life: Toward a Philosophical Biology* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963; new ed., New York: Dell, 1966; second new ed., Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1982); *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age*, trans. Hans Jonas with the collaboration of David Herr (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984); *Philosophical Essays: From Ancient Creed to Technological Man* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1974; new ed., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980). A full bibliography of Jonas's works is provided at the end of this volume.

[5] Lurianic Kabbalah is the Kabbalah generated by Isaac Luria (d. 1572) and the mystical fraternity of Jewish exiles from Iberia in Safed. On the life of this community and Luria's mystical theology, see Lawrence Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos: Isaac Luria and His Kabbalistic Fellowship* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003). On the Lurianic cosmogonic myth of divine "withdrawal" (*tzimtzum*), which inspired Jonas's theology, see ibid., 124–49. Jonas's use of these ideas is discussed in Ron Margolin's essay in Part I and Christian Wiese's essay in Part II.

[6] Hans Jonas, "Evolution and Freedom: On the Continuity among Life Forms," in *Mortality and Morality: A Search for the Good after Auschwitz*, ed. Lawrence Vogel (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 59–74, here 66.

[7] While Darwin's thought did elicit a few theological responses, to date no Jewish philosopher has attempted to wrestle with it from the perspective of Jewish philosophy. On the reception of Darwin in Jewish culture see Geoffrey Cantor and Mark Swetlitz, eds., *Jewish Tradition and the Challenge of Darwinism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006). The volume was based on a conference held at ASU on February 26–28, 2004, which I organized with Prof. Cantor and Dr. Swetlitz. Yet even this pioneering volume includes no philosophical engagement with Darwinism. The reason for this lacuna is simple: contemporary Jewish philosophers are not versed in the sciences.

Despite his originality and compelling moral vision, the influence of Jonas's philosophy was rather mixed. In Europe he was most influential: *Das Prinzip Verantwortung: Versuch einer Ethik für die Technologische Zivilisation* (published in Germany in 1979 and translated into English as *The Imperative of Responsibility* in 1984) sold over two hundred thousand copies in Germany and received the Peace Prize of the German Bookseller Association in 1987 along with an award for the best book translated into Italian in 1992. Germany, the country Jonas was forced to flee in 1933, honored him with a public statue in his hometown and a commemorative stamp on his 100th birthday in 2003. Jonas's thought continues to generate many books,[8] conferences, and symposia, in part under the leadership of Dietrich Böhler at the Hans Jonas Zentrum at the Free University of Berlin, and interest in Jonas's thought has increased with the growing awareness of the ecological crisis, to which he was already attentive in the 1970s. In Asia as well, especially in Japan, Jonas's thought has received considerable attention from bioethicists and philosophers, as William LaFleur documents in this volume. Jonas's focus on responsibility for the well-being of future generations resonates deeply with Japanese thought, whose transgenerational ethics is rooted in Confucian and Buddhist beliefs, assaulted by the horrors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

By contrast, in the United States, where Jonas was a citizen, his thought has been less influential, even though some of his students at the New School for Social Research, where Jonas taught for two decades, became well-known public intellectuals who issued works for Jonas and about him. In 1978 Jonas's students prepared a *Festschrift* in honor of his seventy-fifth birthday,[9] and in 1995 the *Hastings Center Report* dedicated a special issue to Jonas, edited by Strachan Donnelley, who

[8] A most recent example is Ralf Seidel and Meiken Endruweit, eds., *Prinzip Zukunft: Im Dialog mit Hans Jonas* (Paderborn: Mentis, 2007). I thank Lore Jonas for sending me this book.

[9] Stuart F. Spicker, ed., *Organism, Medicine, and Metaphysics: Essays in Honor of Hans Jonas on His 75th Birthday, May 10, 1978* (Dordrecht and Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1978).

also contributed to the volume.[10] Jonas's most famous student is Leon Kass, the previous chairperson of the President's Council on Bioethics. Although Kass was undoubtedly inspired by Jonas's critique of biotechnology, Kass's own views on a range of disputed issues in bioethics are quite different from Jonas's. As Lawrence Vogel explains,[11] Kass was also deeply influenced by another German-Jewish émigré, Leo Strauss, whose political sensibilities were by no means identical with Jonas's.

Several factors might account for Jonas's limited influence on American academe. To begin, when Jonas settled in the U.S. he was already in his fifties, and his way of doing philosophy had been shaped by the phenomenological tradition that dominated the German philosophical tradition prior to the rise of Nazism. By contrast, the Anglo-American analytic tradition which held sway over philosophy departments in the U.S. was critical and even hostile to the phenomenological style of Continental philosophy. Conversely, Jonas on his part, as Vittorio Hösle notes, largely "continued to ignore analytic philosophy, although he did learn a lot from Whitehead." Thus the difference in philosophical orientations determined that Jonas's philosophy would exert limited impact on American philosophy, while making German philosophy available to the English-speaking world.

It is reasonable to expect that because Jonas was a Jew trained in philosophy and a philosopher whose reflections were inspired by Jewish religious beliefs, that his thought would exercise significant impact on the field of Jewish studies, in general, and on the subfield of Jewish philosophy, in particular. Yet, this is not the case. As Lawrence Troster correctly notes, "within Jewish circles he is one of the most neglected philosophers of the twentieth century." Jonas is usually not counted in the "canon" of modern Jewish philosophy, which includes Hermann Cohen, Martin Buber, Franz Rosenzweig, Leo Strauss, Emmanuel Levinas, and Mordecai Kaplan, to mention just the most famous. It is indicative that in the recently published *Cambridge Companion to Modern Jewish Philosophy* Jonas is conspicuously missing.[12] In truth, Jonas himself

[10] Strachan Donnelley, ed., "The Legacy of Hans Jonas," special issue of the *Hastings Center Report* 25 (no. 7): 1995. The volume contains a useful select bibliography.

[11] Vogel's essay appeared first in the *Hastings Center Report* (May–June, 2006). Unfortunately, my efforts to secure a paper about Jonas and Strauss for this volume were unsuccessful.

[12] Michael L. Morgan and Peter Eli Gordon, eds., *Cambridge Companion to Modern Jewish Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). One might retort that since Jonas refused to be labeled a "Jewish philosopher," it is appropriate that he be excluded from the volume. Yet Emmanuel Levinas also shunned this label, and he is regarded as the most influential Jewish philosopher of the twentieth century notwithstanding.

was partly responsible for his marginality in Jewish studies. As Christian Wiese makes clear, Jonas did not want to be known as a "Jewish philosopher," lest this phrase diminish the universal appeal of his philosophy, yet Jonas had been an ardent Zionist since the 1920s and was deeply concerned about the physical, cultural, and spiritual survival of the Jewish people. Like many other German-Jewish intellectuals, Jonas felt ambivalent toward Judaism, but he not only wrote about Jewish theological questions, especially the meaning of the belief in God after the Holocaust, he also used Jewish symbols and metaphors to express his philosophical ideas. During his life in America, Jonas belonged to a Reform Jewish congregation in New Rochelle, New York; regularly lectured to Jewish audiences; and published in Jewish publications such as the *Journal of the Central Conference of American Rabbis*. Jonas's marginality in Jewish studies, then, cannot be explained solely by his ambivalence toward Judaism.

One contributing factor was Jonas's relationship with Gershom Scholem, the outstanding scholar of Kabbalah who founded Jewish studies in the Hebrew University in 1925 and dominated Jewish studies in Israel until his death in 1982. Scholem was Jonas's personal friend and academic supporter from the 1920s until the early 1950s. But as Christian Wiese documents on the basis of correspondence between Jonas and Scholem, Jonas's decision to settle in North America (after struggling and failing to find academic employment in the nascent State of Israel) generated a harsh rejection from Scholem, who could not forgive Jonas for his betrayal of Zionism. Deliberately or not, Jonas's work received little attention in Israel and only recently have a handful of studies been published about Jonas's philosophy in Israel.[13] Israeli scholars who specialize in the study of late antiquity, of course, have been familiar with and referred to Jonas's studies of Gnosticism, but on the whole Jonas's scholarship did not inform the scholarship on the Jewish mystical tradition, which remained under the sway of Scholem well into the 1990s.

[13] Yotam Hotam, *Modern Gnosis and Zionism* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 2007); idem, "Modernity, Gnostic Heresy, and Zionism," *Kabbalah* 12 (2004): 339–51; Ron Margolin, "From the Study of Gnosis to the Concept of God after Auschwitz: The Biography and Philosophy of Hans Jonas" [in Hebrew], introduction to the Hebrew edition of Hans Jonas, *Gedanken über Gott* (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2004), 7–43.

In all likelihood the recent interest in Jonas is not unrelated to changes in the study of Kabbalah in Israel after the death of Scholem.[14]

In North America, where Jonas's work on Gnosticism became well known after it was published in a popularized English version in 1958, Judaic scholars who knew Jonas as a scholar of Gnosticism remained uninformed about Jonas's philosophical biology, environmental ethics, and bioethics. These subfields, to which Jonas contributed in the late 1960s and 1970s, came into their own in Jewish studies only during the 1990s, when the Jewish environmental movement took root and when Jewish bioethicists began to carve their special niche in debates about biotechnology, such as in-vitro fertilization, cloning, and stem-cell research.[15] However, in these fields too, the impact of Jonas has been rather limited. The nascent discourse of Jewish environmentalism has barely paid attention to Jonas, as Lawrence Troster accurately points out, and the Jewish bioethicists who do mention his writings on biotechnology do not engage his philosophical biology, let alone his early work on Gnosticism.[16] Even when Jonas did reflect on a topic that preoccupied many Jewish thinkers in the 1970s and 1980s—the Holocaust—he did so in his own very distinctive way and without conversation with other post-Holocaust Jewish theologians. Jonas's independent response to the trauma of the Holocaust was congruent with the insights of process philosophy, but this brand of philosophy had very few adherents among Jewish theologians.[17] As a result, Jonas's theological reflections about the Holocaust did not receive nearly as much attention as the post-Holocaust theology of Emil Fackenheim, Richard Rubinstein, Eliezer Berkovitz, and Irving Greenberg, whose works Jonas did not engage in his writings.[18]

[14] See Moshe Idel, "Academic Studies of Kabbalah in Israel, 1923–1998: A Short Survey," *Studia Judaica* 8 (1998): 91–114.

[15] For an overview of this discourse of Jewish environmentalism, see Hava Tirosh-Samuelson, "Judaism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 25–64. For an overview of Jewish bioethics, consult Noam J. Zohar, *Alternatives in Jewish Bioethics* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997).

[16] For example, Dena Davis, *Genetic Dilemmas: Reproductive Technology, Parental Choices, and Children's Futures* (New York: Routledge, 2001). Her interaction with Jonas's views on cloning is discussed in Bernard G. Prusak's essay in Part II.

[17] A few rabbis such as William Kaufmann, Harold Schulweiss, and Sol Tanenzapf were influenced by process philosophy and their theology was inspired by it, but there are no Jewish process philosophers in the class of Whitehead, Charles Hartshorne, or John Cobb, with the exception of Jonas.

[18] For a summary of their reflections, see Steven T. Katz, *Post-Holocaust Dialogues: Critical Studies in Modern Jewish Thought* (New York: New York University Press, 1983).

In short, throughout his long career, Jonas remained a unique and distinctive thinker who did not fit neatly into existing classifications and whose thought was inherently interdisciplinary, crossing the disciplinary boundaries between history, philosophy, theology, biology, bioethics, and environmental philosophy. This volume offers the first interdisciplinary, comprehensive overview of Jonas's thought in English. Highlighting the inherently interdisciplinary nature of Jonas's legacy, the volume assembles the work of historians, theologians, philosophers, biologists, bioethicists, environmental thinkers, and political theorists who reflect on the various aspects of Jonas's multifaceted intellectual legacy. The contributors to the volume have engaged Jonas's life and works on various levels. Some studied directly under Jonas (i.e., Strachan Donnelly) or have known Jonas personally (e.g., Kurt Rudolph, Robert Cummings Neville, William LaFleur, Vittorio Hösle); others have devoted much of their scholarship to Jonas's life and work (i.e., Christian Wiese, Richard Wolin, and Lawrence Vogel), whereas still others began their academic career by writing specifically about Jonas in projects that vary from theology in the Weimar Republic (Benjamin Lazier), through philosophical anthropology (Bernard G. Prusak) to Zionism and religious secularism (Ron Margolin). Most of the contributors to this volume have engaged Jonas's legacy in the context of larger intellectual projects, be it German-Jewish history and culture (Steven M. Wasserstrom), the study of Gnosticism (Kurt Rudolph), Western philosophy (Vittorio Hösle, Micha Brumlik, and Konrad Paul Liessmann), Marxism and utopian thought (Michael Löwy), philosophy of technology (Carl Mitcham and Frederick Ferré), environmental philosophy (Lawrence Troster and Martin Yaffe), and process philosophy (Sandra B. Lubarsky and Robert Cummings Neville). The fact that the contributors include such a wide array of scholars, each with distinctive expertise, underscores the richness of Jonas's multifaceted legacy and his continued relevance to scholars.

In taking an interdisciplinary approach to the legacy of Jonas, this volume intends to accomplish several goals: To begin, this volume wishes to highlight the interdisciplinarity that characterizes Jonas's thought and argues that only when all of these aspects are considered in tandem, can the depth and originality of Jonas's legacy be grasped. In this regard, as well as in many others, Jonas was ahead of his time, since today interdisciplinarity and even transdisciplinarity is the hallmark of innovative scholarship. Second, this volume wishes to create a bridge between scholarship about Jonas in German, English, Hebrew, and Japanese, linking disparate scholarly communities. It is hoped that the volume

will increase interaction among scholars who are fascinated by Jonas and inspire more collaborative projects. Third, this volume is intended to raise the profile of Jonas among Judaic scholars and especially among scholars of Jewish philosophy, generating a new conversation between Jonas and the thought of Jewish thinkers in the twentieth century. More specifically, it is hoped that Jonas's interest in modern science and technology will inspire practitioners of Jewish philosophy to enter the academic field of science and religion and give rise to a new subfield within Jewish studies of science and Judaism. Finally, the volume wishes to bring Jonas's cautionary stance toward modern biotechnology to the attention of all readers who are concerned about the novel situation in which the human being has become a design project. Jonas spoke critically about genetic engineering, the possibility of human cloning, and the attempt to get rid of "bad" genes through germline engineering. He articulated the Precautionary Principle because of his awareness of the law of unintended consequences and his deep respect toward nature.

The volume is divided into two main parts, with an introductory essay by Richard Wolin, delivered as the keynote address at the ASU conference, and a few concluding reflections by several responders at the conference. Part I presents Jonas as a German-Jewish intellectual, highlighting his education; his relations to his formidable teachers, Martin Heidegger and Rudolph Bultmann; and his response to the luminaries of German philosophy: G. F. W. Hegel and Immanuel Kant. The essays in Part I also depict the personal and intellectual relations between Jonas and other leading German-Jewish intellectuals, e.g., Günther Anders (1902–1992), Hannah Arendt (1906–1975), Gershom Scholem (1897–1982), Ernst Bloch (1885–1977), Martin Buber (1878–1965), and Emmanuel Levinas (1906–1995). By situating Jonas in the context of German-Jewish culture, the extent to which Jonas was both a product of his milieu and a critic of it becomes clear.

Part II focuses on Jonas's philosophy of nature, his critique of modern technology, especially cloning of humans, and his contribution to environmental philosophy. Essays in Part II bring Jonas into conversation with a fellow German émigré, naturalist, and philosopher of biology, Ernst Mayr (1905–2004); as well as with the philosophy of Spinoza, the seventeenth-century Jew whose monistic metaphysics and psychology challenged Cartesian dualism; Arne Naess (1937–2004), the founder and theoretician of the Deep Ecology movement; and Aldo Leopold (1887–1948), the forester, ecologist and main inspiration for the conservationist movement in the US. As noted above, Jonas's philosophy

of nature was congruent with the process philosophy of Whitehead, but lacked the technical vocabulary of the British philosopher and did not go as far as Whitehead, as Sandra B. Lubarsky explains. Yet, it is important to remember that for Jonas philosophy of nature was not just an abstract philosophical matter but a very personal way of addressing the crisis of the twentieth century occasioned by the dark side of modern science and technology, which inflicted on humanity Auschwitz, Hiroshima, and the current ecological crisis. Together the essays of Parts I and II suggest that Jonas's legacy exhibits coherence, despite its breadth and development over time. Jonas's wrestling with philosophical, theological, historical, environmental, and bioethical questions was interrelated, shaped by his own personal life experience and his moral vision.

The opening essay by Richard Wolin contextualizes Jonas's approach to the twentieth century, "whose hallmarks were genocidal excess, totalitarianism, death camps, crematoria, industrialized mass murder, and ultimately, the specter of nuclear annihilation."[19] The essay explores why Jonas rejected the study of Gnosticism, why he accepted Heidegger's diagnosis of modernity as nihilistic and devoid of intrinsic value, and how Jonas attempted to revive a premodern holistic view of nature in order to overcome the very nihilism that Heidegger so aptly identified but also fell victim to. Wolin's introduction identifies many of the volume's themes, treated in detail by the essays in the two parts of the volume.

Jonas grew up in a secular home, and like many other Jews in the Weimar Republic, he took full advantage of Germany's intellectual richness when German universities admitted Jews after their formal emancipation by 1870. However, Jonas experienced the German university as a Jew who was always reminded of his otherness, and it was as a Jew that Jonas became aware of the limitations of his celebrated teacher, Heidegger, who was deeply admired by several Jewish students. Vittorio Hösle's essay locates the unique place of Jonas in the history of German philosophy: a German Jew who lived in English-speaking countries since 1933, making the German philosophical tradition known outside Germany through the medium of the English language. As "the last German national philosopher" Jonas was both indebted to the great luminaries of the tradition, especially Kant and Hegel, while

[19] Richard Wolin spells out the coherence of Jonas's thought in the chapter devoted to Jonas in *Heidegger's Children*, 101–33.

engaging them critically and reframing their insights. Heidegger, as is well known, was the main source of Jonas's critical engagement with Kant and Hegel, but Jonas asserted his independence from his teacher by offering an alternative to Heidegger that still used Heidegger's distinctive vocabulary.

Understanding Jonas's relationship with Heidegger requires close attention to Jonas's studies in the University of Marburg, where during the 1920s Jonas immersed himself in the study of Gnosticism, writing a dissertation under Heidegger's supervision. Steven Wasserstrom's essay focuses on one year in Marburg—1928—and offers a detailed group portrait of all people (Jews and non-Jews) who participated in Gnostic studies in Marburg. It was their construction of Gnosticism that has dominated the history of religions until the 1990s. Wasserstrom explains how "Gnosis was part Orientalism, classics, philology, theology, philosophy, and history" and how the young Jonas, along with other Jews (e.g., Hans Lewy, Paul Kraus, Martin Plessner, Shlomo Pines, Hans-Jakob Polotsky, and Franz Rosenthal),[20] fell under the spell of Gnostic studies, as a critical response to the other dominant philosophical movement at the University of Marburg—neo-Kantianism. Jonas's critical engagement with neo-Kantianism, articulated by Hermann Cohen in Marburg, is discussed by several essays in Part I.

While the involvement in Gnostic studies and the critique of neo-Kantianism reflected the mentorship of Heidegger on the young Jonas, there was yet another major mentor that shaped his intellectual outlook: Rudolf Bultmann. In fact, as Micha Brumlik notes, during the 1920s there was an intensive cooperation between Heidegger and Bultmann in Marburg, through joint seminars and the invitation to the philosopher to give lectures before a circle of theologians. Brumlik shows that both Bultmann and Jonas "were convinced that the existential analysis shaped by Heidegger represented a particularly fruitful method of grasping the actual meaning of a historical phenomenon through the principle of existential analysis" but demonstrates why Bultmann's influence on Jonas would serve as a source of the later critique of Heidegger by the older Jonas.

Bultmann introduced Jonas to the New Testament and the writings of the church fathers, but as a Jew Jonas could not write a doctoral

[20] All but Rosenthal migrated to Palestine and were instrumental in the study of classical and medieval thought at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

dissertation in Protestant theology with his beloved teacher. Benjamin Lazier discusses the unique situation of the Jewish students in Marburg, such as Jonas, who studied with both Heidegger and Bultmann. Although many of them were devoted to Heidegger, some of them came to confront the implications of Heidegger's philosophy. For Jonas there was "a fit between Heidegger and Gnosticism: Heidegger's existentialism replicated and radicalized Gnostic nihilism." Therefore, "to overcome Heidegger meant also to overcome Gnosticism." Lazier shows that Jonas considered the main challenge not so much Heidegger and the Gnostics but the Apostle Paul, as interpreted by Karl Barth, who was the inspiration for both Bultmann and Heidegger. Lazier argues that "the guiding impulse of [Jonas's] philosophical biology [was] to revalue the world in the face of the absent God and to reinsert man into the continuum of biological life." In so doing Jonas was able to turn "both Gnostic and Pauline theology on its head." In this interpretation, Jonas's focus on philosophical biology not only predated his war experience, it was part of a much larger philosophical and theological project.

Bultmann's work in Marburg represented the second generation of the religious-historical school, as Kurt Rudolph, a prominent scholar of Gnosticism and early Christianity explains. Bultmann's approach was inspired by the discoveries of the original Coptic texts in 1898 and his task was to make these bodies of evidence usable for exegesis of the New Testament, especially the Gospel according to John and the writings of Paul. Rudolph considers Jonas's 1934 work on Gnosticism in historical perspective and notes that at the time it received relatively few reviews, even though "the unofficial effect of the book was developed through Bultmann's students, who never disowned the book" despite the Jewish identity of its author. In Gnosticism Jonas saw a "non-Greek and at the same time (in disassociation from Harnack) a non-Christian spirit," because he considered Gnosticism a revolutionary break with ancient and biblical tradition. Rudolph contextualizes Jonas's interpretation of Gnosticism as a special case of a worldview that manifested itself in the mystery religions, hermeticism, neo-Platonism, Jewish apocalypticism, and early Christianity. In recent years this view of Gnosticism has been under critique, and Rudolph considers one main critic, Michael Williams,[21] and addresses his critique.

[21] Michael A. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism": An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

While Jonas was a student in Marburg, he already was a committed Zionist and that commitment is not irrelevant to his philosophical posture and to his contention that there is an intrinsic link between Gnosticism, modern nihilism, and existentialism, exemplified in Heidegger. The essay by Konrad Paul Liessmann focuses on Hans Jonas's best male friend, Günther Anders, the cultural critic and anti-nuclear activist, who was the first husband of Hannah Arendt, Jonas's best female friend.[22] Unlike the Zionist Jonas, Anders was a Marxist social critic associated with the circle of Bertold Brecht. Both Anders and Jonas fled Nazi Germany in 1933, the former for Paris and thereafter to the U.S. and the latter to Palestine via London. Jonas and Anders remained friends until the 1980s, although they lived far apart (Anders resettled in Vienna after World War II), and there are striking affinities and differences between them. Liessmann explores the different answers that Anders and Jonas gave to the question: "why humans should continue to exist in the future." Jonas answered it in his *Das Prinzip Verantwortung*. Anders reflected on the potential destruction of the human species in 1956 "and rejected all attempts to derive a justification for a special right of humanity to exist" although, for Anders, "the fact that the continued existence of humanity could not be conclusively justified did not, however, imply that one was permitted to abandon it to destruction." Both philosophers attempted to determine the fundamental ethical maxims for the technological age by reformulating Kant's categorical imperative, but Jonas demonstrated that even purposes that can be interpreted as values are based in nature itself. Thus Jonas restated the categorical imperative as follows: "Act so that the effects of your action are compatible with the permanence of genuine human life," or negatively put: "Act so that the effect of your action are not destructive for the future possibility of such life." Liessmann argues that while both Jonas and Anders reflected for years on the significance of the Holocaust for humanity's ability to believe in the traditional conception of God, their answers were diametrically opposed: "Jonas thought that after Auschwitz one could speak only of a God at the mercy of the actions of humans; for Anders, Auschwitz and Hiroshima provided the strongest indication that God could not exist."

[22] For a biography of Günther Anders, see Konrad P. Lissmann, *Günther Anders, Philosphieren im Zeitalter der technologischen Revolutionen* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2002); and Paul van Dijk, *Anthropology in the Age of Technology: The Philosophical Contribution of Günther Anders* (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi, 2000).

A different comparative discussion of Jonas and a Jewish contemporary is offered by Michael Löwy, who focuses on Ernst Bloch, a German-Jewish revolutionary thinker and author of *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, written between 1938 and 1947 while in exile in the US, and revised in 1953 and 1959.[23] Bloch believed in imminent revolutionary change in Europe, which he describes in Jewish messianic language, since he saw Judaism as a utopian religion that centered on the hope for the messiah. Like Walter Benjamin, Bloch held that "revolutionary utopia is inseparably associated with a messianic concept of time that stands counter to any gradualism of progress." While both Jonas and Bloch took a critical stance toward modern, technological, industrial civilization, Bloch's social utopia blended Marxist and Romantic elements, envisioning a cooperative, non-destructive rapport between human beings and nature. Löwy notes that Jonas was critical of Marxists in general and Bloch in particular for holding an anthropocentric and overly romantic approach to nature. Löwy considers Jonas's critique of Bloch, accepting some aspects of it while rejecting others. Despite their differences, both Jonas and Bloch were most attentive to the ecological crisis which has become much more acute since they prophetically critiqued modern technology.

Jonas's interaction with leading German-Jewish intellectuals, such as Anders and Bloch, was facilitated by his remarkable ability to form long-lasting friendships and personal bonds, as Christian Wiese, the biographer of Jonas, editor of Jonas's memoirs, and the co-editor of this volume notes. Wiese's essay focuses on the rather complex and even painful relationship of Jonas with Gershom Scholem and Hannah Arendt. Jonas was brought up in a secular Jewish home and shared with Scholem the ambivalence of the secular Jewish intellectuals toward the beliefs and rituals of Judaism. But whereas Jonas rejected messianism and was highly critical of Ernst Bloch's utopian thinking, Scholem devoted his scholarly energy to Jewish messianism, especially the messianic dimension of Jewish mystical tradition.[24] Wiese explains how Scholem and

[23] A useful overview of Ernst Bloch is offered by Wayne Hudson, *The Marxist Philosophy of Ernst Bloch* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982).

[24] See Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality* (New York: Schocken, 1971). It was Scholem's interest in messianism that led him to study the life of Sabbatai Zevi, the seventeenth-century messianic claimant, and the movement that was generated by his messianic claims. See Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah*, trans. R. J. Zwi Werblowsky (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973).

Jonas differed in their approach to Judaism and in their interpretation of the relationship between Gnosticism and Jewish mysticism. But it seems that the rift between the two friends revolved not around theology or the history of religion but around Zionism and Jonas's decision to settle in the U.S., which Scholem considered a betrayal of Zionism. Whereas the friendship with Scholem did not survive, because it revolved around Jonas's personal preference for the Diaspora, the friendship between Jonas and Hannah Arendt did survive the controversy surrounding Arendt's reporting about the Adolph Eichmann trial in 1961.[25] Jonas sided with Scholem's critique of Arendt and for two years there was complete silence between the close friends, yet they were able to renew their friendship prior to Arendt's death in 1975.

If Scholem and Arendt were personal friends of Jonas, the Jewish contemporaries of Jonas who should be compared to him are Martin Buber and Emmanuel Levinas, since all three were critical of Kant and Kantianism and shared the phenomenological approach to philosophy. Micha H. Werner proceeds to do precisely that, first comparing Levinas and Buber and then discussing Jonas in comparison with Buber and Levinas.[26] Although Jonas, contrary to Buber and Levinas, does not belong to the philosophy of dialogue tradition, Werner highlights interesting parallels between Jonas's concept of responsibility and the approach of Buber and Levinas. Like them, Jonas wanted to overcome the subject-object dichotomy of the Kantian world of appearances, but unlike Buber and Levinas, Jonas does not introduce a new dichotomy between the I-You and I-It relations, between totality and infinity, between ontology and metaphysics and life. Werner explains the four main characteristics of Jonas's concept of responsibility and engages them critically, showing that some of Jonas's criticism of Buber and Levinas can be found in Jonas's own ethics.

In the final essay of Part I, Ron Margolin wrestles with an issue that runs throughout the entire volume: the relationship between secular

[25] On the controversy surrounding the Eichmann trial, see Larry May and Jerome Kohn, eds., *Hannah Arendt: Twenty Years Later* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997); Steven E. Aschheim, ed., *Hannah Arendt in Jerusalem* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001). For an assessment of Arendt's ambivalent relationship to Judaism, see Richard J. Bernstein, *Hannah Arendt and the Jewish Question* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996).

[26] For comparisons of these two Jewish philosophers, see Peter Atterton, Matthew Calarco, and Maurice Friedman, eds., *Levinas and Buber: Dialogue and Difference* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2004).

philosophy and Jewish religious beliefs in the thought of Hans Jonas. Jonas was brought up in a secular home but he continued to reflect on Judaism and Jewish existence in philosophical categories that were also inspired by Jewish religious sources, especially the Bible and Lurianic Kabbalah. Margolin labels Jonas's way of thinking as "secular religiosity," which means "rational scientific thought combined with elements of religious existentialism," and correctly applies the term to other twentieth-century Jewish philosophers, from Hermann Cohen, through Martin Buber, to Franz Rosenzweig and A. D. Gordon. All of these thinkers influenced the thought of young Hans Jonas, and Margolin explains how Jonas's "secular religiosity" reinterprets the belief in God and His relationship to the physical world, the belief in creation, the belief in the creation of humanity in the divine image, and the commitment to the observance of commandments. Margolin shows how Jonas sought to bridge between the dead God of the philosophers and the personal God of religion and how he tried to create a "secular philosophy of nature that would span the imaginary gap between what is scientifically ascertainable and what is morally binding." Most importantly, Jonas would find in the myth of Lurianic Kabbalah, especially the concepts of divine "contraction" or "withdrawal" (*tzimtzum*) the proper poetic expression of his philosophical ideas. Margolin's observations are corroborated by a second essay of Christian Wiese in Part II of the volume.

Part II focuses on Jonas's biology-centered philosophy conceived as an anti-existentialist and anti-nihilist response to Heidegger. Jonas maintained that to adequately describe and account for human experience, one must offer an integrated conceptual analysis of teleology and the idea of organic matter. Even though the relationship of his ideas to the current understanding of evolutionary biology and its implications are problematic, Jonas's conception has provided one of the most powerful foundations for ethics in the present scientific world. Returning to the teleological view of nature characteristic of ancient philosophy, Jonas regarded *physis* as a natural standard by which humanity should live. According to Jonas, it is *not* true that science is necessarily incompatible with a teleological notion of nature. Rather, it is only *modern* science that has come to replicate Gnostic dualism and insist on a world bereft of divinity. Rejecting this vision, Jonas held that organic life itself serves as the foundation of ethics since each organism encompasses basic stirrings of freedom.

The strength of Jonas's philosophy was in giving a phenomenological account of organic, including humanly organic, life. Jonas's philosophy

of organism starts with the phenomenon of metabolism and interprets organic life and individual organisms in terms, concepts, and categories that transcend Cartesian dualism, idealism, and physicalist materialism. As noted above, for Jonas, organic life itself is an ontological revolution in the history of matter, a radical change in matter's mode of being. By giving organisms on all levels their philosophical due, animate nature was philosophically rehabilitated. The radical split between nature and ethics, between "is" and "ought," was thereby bridged.

The essay by Strachan Donnelley brings Jonas in conversation with Ernst Mayr, a non-Jewish evolutionary biologist and philosopher of biology who left Germany after the rise of Nazism and settled in the U.S. Donnelley summarizes Mayr's interpretation of Darwinian thought which saw "the biological realm [as a] complex, historically contingent, probabilistic, and stochastic affair."[27] Jonas shared Mayr's rejection of essentialist and typological thinking as well the reductionist methodology of the physical science, but unlike Mayr, Jonas was "relatively uninterested, philosophically and ethically, with nature's concrete history; he [was] more attentive to the existential drama, inner life, and worldly adventures [of organisms]." Having rejected the ontological dualism of mind and matter and its two oppositional derivatives, idealism and materialism, Jonas ascribed subjectivity to all forms of life in the concept of "needful freedom" which all life exhibits. While Jonas accepted Darwinism, "his phenomenological and speculative interpretation of organic life made little serious use of genetics and informational matter, that which is so central to Mayr's Darwinian account." Because Jonas ignored nature's evolutionary and information engendering (genomic) history, he missed or overlooked the full sweep, grandeur, and value-laden nuances of the natural and historical drama.

Jonas was introduced to theoretical biology already in Germany, where theoretical biology and philosophical anthropology shared common roots from 1900 to 1938,[28] but it was the war experience that inspired

[27] Among the numerous writings of Ernst Mayr the most pertinent to this discussion are the following: Ernst Mayr, *Evolution and the Diversity of Life: Selected Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1976); idem, *The Growth of Biological Thought: Diversity, Evolution, and Inheritance* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982); idem, *Toward a New Philosophy of Biology: Observations of an Evolutionist* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1988).

[28] At the ASU conference, Manfred Laubichler (ASU) explored the indebtedness of Jonas to this academic discourse. He discussed Jonas's ideas in relation to other German thinkers who integrated theoretical biology and philosophical anthropology in their attempt to bridge the gap between nature and culture: Ernst Cassirer (1874–1945), Jacob von Uexhull (1864–1944), Kurt Goldstein (1878–1965), Adolph Meyer-Abisch (1893–1971, Karl Jaspers (1893–1969), and Hannah Arendt (1906–1975). Unfortunately Laubichler was unable to submit his paper to this volume.

him to articulate a systematic philosophy of nature. The horrors of war convinced him that value and disvalue are not human constructs, but "essential to life itself [since] every living thing has a share in life's 'needful freedom.'" Lawrence Vogel, who has contributed greatly to making Jonas accessible to English readers, explains how Jonas "extends psyche or self-concern to all organisms" while insisting that human responsibility toward nature is not derived from theology or religious principles, even though it is compatible with them. Jonas's philosophy of nature made no appeal to revelation, even when he reworked traditional Jewish concepts such as creation in the "image of God," because he was convinced that ontology provides "a more universal footing for ethics than theology."

Focusing on the Bible rather than on rabbinic sources,[29] Jonas insisted that the Torah teaches not only respect for nature but also for our human nature. Creation in the "image of God" means the ability to distinguish between good and evil and our responsibility for promoting the good, symbolized by the commandments. Respect for the mystery of human freedom should make us seek the improvement of character through education rather than genetic manipulation. According to Jonas, we must, therefore, prefer persuasion under conditions of freedom to psychological manipulation in the hands of behavioral engineers. It follows that medicine should not be transformed into the effort to eliminate imperfection or to prolong life at all cost.

Leon R. Kass, Jonas's most influential student, was deeply inspired by Jonas's views, but whereas for Jonas the Bible and the Jewish tradition served as a source of metaphors or symbols to express philosophical ideas, Kass used the Bible to critique what he finds problematic in the "post-moral ambience" of modern liberal democracies. Vogel's exposition of Kass's views on marriage, feminism, and homosexuality accentuates both the indebtedness of Kass to Leo Strauss, the main intellectual inspiration of political neoconservatism in the U.S., and the congruence between Kass and the social agenda of the Religious Right.[30]

[29] This choice reflected the viewpoint of nineteenth-century Reform Judaism, the only strand of Judaism to which Jonas could relate.

[30] Vogel is correct to note that on several controversial issues (e.g., in-vitro fertilization, cloning, and stem-cell research) Jewish bioethicists (be they Orthodox, Conserva-

In his comparative analysis of Jonas and Kass, Vogel clearly prefers Jonas's minimalist version of natural law over Kass's rendering of this tradition.

Kass was not only a student of Jonas but also a catalyst for Jonas's thought. Kass wrote against laboratory-assisted reproduction, cloning, and manipulation of human embryos in 1971–1972 and his essays led Jonas to write "Biological Engineering—A Preview," in 1974.[31] Bernard Prusak takes a close look at Jonas's essay in light of various challenges raised to Jonas by bioethicists such as Bonnie Steinbock, Dan Brock, and Dena Davis.[32] Whereas these ethicists and others largely welcome current advances in biotechnology, including human cloning, Jonas foresaw the possibility of cloning with trepidation and offered an existential critique of it. Prusak argues that in order to "save" Jonas from his critics, one should focus not on the issue of foreknowledge (which states that the clone will be deprived of freedom to be him/herself because the clone knows too much in advance about him/herself and thus loses the spontaneity of becoming him/herself) but on the "idea of cloning." It is this idea which Jonas found to be "tyrannical in effect" and which necessitates that we look carefully into the ethics of cloning. The upshot of Prusak's scholastic engagement with the critics of Jonas is to show that Jonas was correct in viewing this prospect with trepidation. While Jonas's arguments against cloning were not decisive, he did raise the

tive, or secular) are more in favor of biotechnology than Kass is. However, Kass's view is not a radical departure from the Jewish tradition, as Vogel claims. First, Kass's appeal to natural law theory is supported by David Novak, who marshals significant evidence for it in medieval Jewish thought. Second, the reflections of Jewish philosophers (e.g., Philo, Moses Maimonides, and Joseph Soloveitchik) about the creation in the divine image can support Kass's cautionary stance toward biotechnology. See David Novak, *Natural Law in Judaism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Hava Tirosh-Samuelson, "Human Dignity, Jewish Philosophy, and the New Genetics," in *Biotechnology, Our Future as Human Beings and Citizens*, ed. Sean D. Sutton (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, forthcoming).

[31] Leon Kass, "Babies by Means of In-Vitro Fertilization: Unethical Experiments on the Unborn?" *New England Journal of Medicine* 285 (1971): 1174–79; "Making Babies—The New Biology and the 'Old' Morality," *Public Interest*, Winter 1972; Hans Jonas, "Biological Engineering—A Preview," in *Philosophical Essays: From Ancient Creed to Technological Man*," 141–67.

[32] Bonnie Steinbock, "Cloning Human Beings: Sorting through the Ethical Issues," in *Human Cloning: Science, Ethics, and Public Policy*, ed. Barbara MacKinnon (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 68–84; Dan W. Brock, "Cloning Human Beings: An Assessment of the Ethical Issues Pro and Con," in *Clones and Clones: Facts and Fantasies about Human Cloning*, ed. Martha C. Nussbaum and Cass R. Sunstein (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998), 141–67; Dena S. Davis, *Genetic Dilemmas: Reproductive Technology, Parental Choices, and Children's Futures* (New York: Routledge, 2001).

question of what our biological constitution must be for the humanness of human life. To reflect on the connection between our mortal frames and our moral lives is an exercise that Jonas could have recognized as his own.

The cautionary stance that Jonas took toward cloning informed his entire environmental philosophy, which was critical of modern science. Whereas premodern philosophers of nature, going all the way to Aristotle, saw nature as purposive, and all forms of life, including human life, as interlinked, modern science denies teleology and radically separates between the mental and the physical, between what is and what ought be. Jonas criticized the dualism underlying modern science and alluded to Spinoza as a proper correction of Cartesian dualism. Yaffe explains how Jonas read Spinoza's *Ethics*, especially in regard to the difference between metabolism of organic life and mechanism, since "organisms are not exactly atoms... they are selves." Yaffe explores the difference between Jonas's approach to Spinoza and that of Arne Naess, the Norwegian philosopher who is the founder of the Deep Ecology movement.[33] Whereas "Jonas finds Spinoza primarily of philosophical interest in his own right and only secondarily... of interest in regard to environmental ethics, Naess finds him only secondarily of philosophical interest in his own right and primarily of interest in regard to environmental ethics." Preferring Jonas to Naess, Yaffe accounts for the shortcomings of Naess's presentation of Spinoza and explains the limitations of Deep Ecology, which open it to the charge that it is undemocratic and even anti-democratic.

Aldo Leopold is another environmental thinker who exerted major influence on environmental philosophy in the U.S. Lawrence Troster, a rabbi who has been at the forefront of the Jewish environmental movement, maintains that reading Jonas's *Imperative of Responsibility* together with Aldo Leopold's "land ethics" can offer a better "scientific and philosophical basis for Jewish environmental ethics than has been formulated up until now." Troster endorses Jonas's critique of modern technology which has made "nature into a mere object for the will of humanity," and he joins Kass in warning against genetic engineering in which "the engineer engineers the engineer." While Jonas did not base his critique

[33] For an overview of the movement and a sample of Arne Naess's writings, see Alan Drengson and Yuichi Inoue, eds., *The Deep Ecology Movement: An Introductory Anthology* (Berkeley, CA: North Atlantic Books, 1995).

of modern technology on theological arguments, he did find in biblical theology the inspiration for his philosophical insights. Thus Troster shows that whereas Leopold's land ethics offers an ecological Self, which Troster labels as "Community Model," Jonas is more in accord with the traditional Jewish "Caretaker Model" (or stewardship) in which human responsibility toward nature is derived from the very nature of human power. Troster finds biblical support for both models: Leopold's model is articulated by Psalm 148, and Jonas's model is exemplified by Psalm 8. He concludes that both models are useful for Jewish environmental ethics for the twenty-first century.

Jonas's philosophy of nature was not carried out in the abstract as philosophical musing for its own sake, but was rather a deep, thoughtful response to the traumas of the twentieth century and the imminent threat of human extinction. In his second essay for the volume, an expanded version of his original German article, Christian Wiese turns to examine Jonas's ambivalent attitude toward Judaism, his Zionist commitment to "Jewish physical, spiritual, and cultural survival," and his self-understanding as a philosopher who wished his message to be heard by all and not only by Jews. As Jonas described himself, he was "philosopher and Jew at one and the same time"; there was no dichotomy between his philosophic and Jewish identities, but a complimentary polarity. Wiese discusses how Jewish religious terminology such as the "sanctity" or "sacredness" of life and the Jewish liturgical reference to God as "He who wills life" (*rotzeh ba-hayyim*) enabled Jonas to express his ethical philosophy in metaphors or myths that preserved the "mystery" of life. Although Wiese does not label Jonas's system as "religious secularism," he agrees with Margolin that Jonas uses theological language selectively, while attributing to philosophy "the role of secularizing that language for the sake of intellectual honesty." Wiese explains how Jonas wrestled with the question of God and the createdness of life, the phenomenon of evil, suffering, and the "radical enormity of the Holocaust," and worked out a new conception of God who is impotent, who suffers, who is subject to the process of becoming, and who is a caring God. This conception of God is in accord with process philosophy, although its inspiration comes from the key concepts of Lurianic Kabbalah. Wiese makes it patently clear, contrary to Vogel, that Jonas's thought was not torn by the tension between Athens and Jerusalem but that he articulated a subtle and creative way in which he, as a Jew, could cohabit in both Athens and Jerusalem.

Jonas's exceptionally supple mind made it possible for him to engage with diverse intellectual systems and selectively take from them what expresses his own unique insights. The essay by Sandra B. Lubarsky considers the relationship between Jonas and Whitehead's process philosophy that Jonas came to know rather late in life. This historical fact explains the differences between Jonas and process philosophy in regard to the understanding of power, a key issue in Jonas's post-Holocaust theology. Lubarsky argues persuasively that Jonas remained committed to a "particular understanding of power as coercive and dominating" and that it was this commitment which prevented him from "full consideration of Whitehead's alternate understanding of internal relations or of God's power as persuasive." Lubarsky offers a succinct summary of Jonas's post-Holocaust theology and argues that with a better understanding of Whitehead, Jonas could have gone further in his reformulation of the problem of power. A full-fledged commitment to Whitehead could have rendered Jonas's insights more consistent, according to Lubarsky.

The final essay in Part II continues to spell out the implications of Jonas's philosophy of nature not in the context of Judaism but in the context of bioethics in Japan in the post-Hiroshima era. Jonas's philosophy has been most influential in Japan. Lafleur highlights the affinity between Jonas and traditional ethical systems in East Asia and argues that "it would be a tremendous loss to ourselves and future generations if we were to ignore, peripheralize, or misconstrue Jonas's ethical insights." LaFleur takes issue with Richard Wolin's interpretation of Jonas that highlights his indebtedness to Heidegger rather than his critique of and response to Heidegger. In LaFleur's reading, Jonas's concern for future generation should not be construed merely as "paternalism" but should be appreciated for its deep ethical merit; the concern for the well-being of future generations "where an 'ought' is derived from an 'is.'" Jonas's ethics of responsibility was very broad indeed, extending to future generations.

The volume concludes with several insightful reflections about Jonas by Kalman Bland, Frederick Ferré, Carl Mitcham, and Robert Cummings Neville, who responded to papers in the ASU conference with thoughtfulness and creativity. Although this volume seeks to be comprehensive, it should not be the final word on the significance of Jonas's legacy for the twenty-first century. The success of the volume will be its eclipse by new, ever more penetrating studies of Jonas, whose

intellectual honesty and moral integrity should serve as an enduring example to all. Jonas articulated a distinctively meaningful message for the twenty-first century: *The phenomenon of life is at odds with the assumptions of modern materialism*, a view which resonates with the deepest insights of Judaism. Life and the material world necessary for its being command ultimate respect, allegiance, and final moral commitment. Jonas's commitment to the inherent value of life offers a powerful guide to our contemporary perplexity.

INTRODUCTION

ETHICS AFTER AUSCHWITZ: HANS JONAS'S NOTION OF RESPONSIBILITY IN A TECHNOLOGICAL AGE

Richard Wolin

It is worth pausing for a moment at the outset to reflect on what a remarkable life Hans Jonas led. Born in Mönchengladbach, Germany, in 1903, by the age of thirty Jonas had experienced, *in extremis*, the full array of early twentieth-century European cultural and political turmoil: World War I (albeit as a civilian), the rising tide of Central European anti-Semitism, Germany's collapse on the home front accompanied by civil war, the proclamation of the Weimar Republic (Germany's first), anti-democratic coup attempts from both left and right, devastating hyperinflation, and the Crash of 1929, followed by renewed civil strife and the ominous rise of National Socialism. Hitler's 1933 seizure of power would plunge Germany—and Europe—into a twelve-year nightmare of dictatorship, persecutions, concentration camps, and world war. In 1934, in light of escalating levels of anti-Semitic persecution, Jonas wisely decided to emigrate to Palestine. At the time, he pledged that he would only return to Germany as part of a conquering army. As it turned out, his vow proved prophetic. In 1939, he joined the British army's Jewish Brigade, reentering his former homeland along with the victorious allies in 1945. Three years later, in 1948, Jonas would don military garb again to fight in Israel's war of independence. Weary of war, Jonas and his wife, Lore, moved to Montreal in 1949, where he began a distinguished career as a university professor.

Given these life experiences, it is little wonder that Jonas perceived the twentieth century as an age of "sound and fury": a technological Moloch, whose hallmarks were genocidal excess, totalitarianism, death camps, crematoria, industrialized mass murder, and, ultimately, the specter of nuclear annihilation—an eventuality that, if realized, could result in the effacement of human life on earth. It was in opposition to these apocalyptic developments that Jonas boldly sought to formulate a philosophical ethics appropriate to the new hyperreality of modern technology. One should not underestimate the determination and tenacity

it took to confront such issues amid the political claustrophobia of postwar America. The 1950s was the heyday of analytic philosophy—a movement that, under Ludwig Wittgenstein's tutelage, viewed political apathy as a badge of honor. In Wittgenstein's view, philosophy had nothing positive to contribute. Its raison d'être consisted in the elimination of "pseudo-problems." Thus, in *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein proudly declared that, when all is said and done, "*philosophy leaves everything as it is.*"[1] In Jonas's view this complacent, Oxonian, drawing-room approach to the life of the mind was a luxury that cold war America could ill afford. In retrospect, one senses that Jonas's entire philosophical being was directed against Wittgenstein's well-nigh embarrassing proclamation concerning philosophy's irrelevance.

Wilhelmine Germany was in many respects a golden age of Jewish upward social mobility, despite the emergence, circa 1890, of a venomous racial anti-Semitism. Jonas belonged to a generation of assimilated Jews who came to view such opportunities for self-advancement as a birthright. Still, the social benefits of assimilation frequently came at high cultural cost: the wholesale renunciation of one's Jewish specificity—a dilemma well captured by the popular saying among Germanized Jews: "Jewish by the grace of Goethe." Understandably, among Jonas's generation a strong reaction against the strictures and limitations of assimilated Jewry emerged. (The renowned scholar of Jewish mysticism Gershom Scholem tells the story of having been expelled from his parental home once they learned that he was studying Hebrew and attending synagogue.) This Jewish cultural renaissance was spurred by the publication of Martin Buber's *Three Speeches on Judaism* (1911). It reached its zenith with the founding of Buber's and Franz Rosenzweig's legendary center for Jewish adult education, the Freies Jüdisches Lehrhaus, in the cosmopolitan milieu of Frankfurt am Main.

As a youth, Jonas partook of this storied Jewish cultural revival, taking classes at Berlin's Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums (Academy for the Science of Judaism) and cultivating an active interest in Zionism. During the early 1920s he was on the verge of emigrating to Israel. He refrained from doing so since, as we will see, his youthful outlook was beset with competing loyalties.

[1] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, ed. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1972), no. 123.

In 1924 Jonas followed Martin Heidegger from Freiburg to the University of Marburg, where he became part of an immensely talented cohort of young philosophy students including Hannah Arendt, Karl Löwith, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Leo Strauss, and Günther Anders (Arendt's first husband). Under Heidegger's spellbinding tutelage—in his memoirs, Jonas speaks of a veritable Heidegger-cult—Jonas developed a passionate interest in ancient philosophy, a fascination that came to fruition in his dissertation, written under Heidegger's supervision, on Gnosticism. Published in 1934, Jonas's study to this day remains a watershed in the literature on early Christianity. (It is perhaps worth noting, as testimony to the powerful lures of the assimilation among secular Jews, that during the 1920s Hannah Arendt also wrote a dissertation on early Christianity, *St. Augustine's Doctrine of Love.*)

As a result of this life-transforming philosophical initiation in Marburg, Jonas's intellectual loyalties were divided between Athens and Jerusalem: Western philosophy and Jewish concerns. It was an unresolved tension that, when all is said and done, the philosopher was content to endure. In his later years Jonas would, with increasing frequency, devote attention to theological issues: for example, how we might conceive of God in a post-Holocaust universe. This was no minor matter, since a number of Jewish thinkers viewed Auschwitz as a mandate for radical secularism. They reasoned quite logically that the Holocaust provided overwhelming evidence of God's non-existence. After all, how could a well-intentioned and benevolent deity countenance the brutal genocide that was Auschwitz?

Other Jewish thinkers argued that the Holocaust demanded an emphatic reaffirmation of Jewish belief. The Nazis, after all, had already deprived two-thirds of European Jewry of their lives. To divest the rest of their faith would be to accord Hitler an undeserved, posthumous victory.

In his reflections on this dilemma, Jonas pursued a third, highly original tack. Jonas divined a further theological possibility that neither of the approaches just described has adequately explored: the prospect that God existed but was powerless to intervene. For reasons unknown to us, God may have ceased to be omnipotent. Conceivably, divine energies were exhausted in the act of creation. Perhaps after creating the world, God engaged in an act of self-limitation in order to make room for free will. This theory is consistent with the kabbalistic doctrine of *tzimtzum*, the self-contraction of God following the creation of the universe. To be sure, this relativizes our traditional notion of an

omnipotent God. But as Jonas points out, the presumption of divine omnipotence makes for a theological drama devoid of meaning and interest. For under such circumstances, the concept of free will would be deprived of all meaning. As Jonas explains: "Having [in the act of creation] given Himself whole to the becoming world, God has no more to give: it is man's [turn] to give to Him."[2]

Jonas always acknowledged that the fundamental problems in Western philosophy—the nature of being, truth, morality, and goodness—derived from religious sources. Yet, time and again, he insisted that philosophical questions must be resolved immanently: without appealing to the transcendent realm of supersensible knowing. In this respect Jonas remained true to the basic principle of "first philosophy": that valid knowledge must be universally demonstrable. To his credit, Jonas always remained mindful of Kant's celebrated declaration that, in the modern era, "the critical path alone is open to us." This was Kant's code for an approach to philosophy that, respecting the bounds of intelligibility or sense, eschews the speculative and irresponsible flights of fancy endemic to theology. Questions of belief are ultimately matters of conscience. Knowledge, conversely, is the patrimony of humankind.

In many ways Jonas's early study of Gnosticism, conceived under the joint influence of Heidegger and Marburg theologian Rudolf Bultmann, established the tenor and orientation of his later philosophy. Gnosticism is a doctrine that posits a radical, Manichaean separation between the fallen state of human existence in the here and now and divine transcendence. Esoteric knowledge or *gnosis* prescribes the route via which the individual might surmount the manifold ills of creaturely life in the direction of redemption or salvation. It is worth noting that in Heidegger's existentialism one finds an analogous devaluation of the historical present as a realm of "inauthenticity." In *Being and Time* Heidegger invokes the heritage of Protestant theology to describe everyday Being-in-the-world as a realm of "fallenness" (*Verfallenheit*) in which inauthentic modalities such as "curiosity," "idle talk," "ambiguity," and "publicness" predominate. In Jonas's view, Heidegger's diagnosis of the times was cogent and profound. Following Nietzsche, it faithfully described the essence of Western modernity as *nihilistic*: fundamentally

[2] Hans Jonas, "The Concept of God after Auschwitz: A Jewish Voice," in idem, *Mortality and Morality: A Search for the Good after Auschwitz*, ed. Lawrence Vogel (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 131–43, here 142.

devoid of intrinsic value or meaning. Whereas the ancient Greeks embraced the primacy of "virtue" or "the Good," and whereas early Christianity purveyed a sublime message of spiritual salvation, the modern West, under the reign of positivism, foolishly elevated science to the status of the be-all and end-all of human wisdom. In the 1880s Nietzsche perceptively observed that the more value humanity accorded to science, the more it correspondingly devalued itself. Thus Copernicus's heliocentrism relegated earth—which, after all, according to the worldview of modern science, is merely an oversize rock—to the solar system's periphery. Darwin's *Origin of Species* implied that humanity had more in common with simians than with the gods and heroes of classical Greek mythology. Hence, Nietzsche's observation in *The Will to Power*: "Since Copernicus man has been rolling from the center toward X."

Among German intellectuals of the 1920s, this extreme pessimism about the modern age and its prospects was common currency. The idea of "decline" or *Untergang*, as popularized by Spengler's immensely popular *Decline of the West* (*Untergang des Abendlandes*), attained the status of a received idea. Jonas, who was one of Heidegger's star pupils, fully internalized this perspective. His later philosophical project in the post-World War II period developed in response. Thus, in his mature philosophical writings Jonas set himself the ambitious task of formulating an alternative to Western nihilism—the devaluation of all inherited values—as described by Nietzsche, Heidegger, and a host of kindred *Zivilisationskritiker* or critics of civilization.

For Jonas, following Heidegger, the misguided origins of the modern worldview lay with the philosophy of Descartes. The Cartesian separation between thinking and extended substance—*res cogitans* and *res extensa*—constitutes a fateful precedent. By elevating "mind" to the status of an ethereal and disembodied substance, it simultaneously devalued physical nature as inanimate and soulless "material": as mere the stuff of domination. Thus was born the "objectivating" attitude of modern science which, as we realize in retrospect, underwrites the goal of technological world-mastery—the imperious and at times "murderous" project of the "civilized" West. Francis Bacon famously equated "knowledge" with the capacity to subjugate the unruly forces of nature. Descartes' contemporary, Galileo, similarly fantasized about subjecting the natural world in its entirety to the austere, total control of mathematical formulae—a "mathesis universalis" or "mathematicization of nature." In Jonas's view, these misguided theoretical precedents

bequeathed a legacy culminating in the twentieth century's unending train of technologically-induced depradations and horrors.

How, then, might one go about initiating a reversal? This was the question Jonas posed as he resumed philosophizing following his career as a soldier in the British and Israeli armies. His response was contained in lectures and essays that were later collected in *The Phenomenon of Life*. It was in these texts that Jonas developed the conception of "philosophical biology" that proved to be the substructure and mainstay of his later thought.

In the classical Greek view, nature was inherently teleological or directed toward meaningful ends. The Greeks could derive consolation from the fact that both human nature and physical nature (*physis*) partook of a shared, meaningful totality. Humanity strove to realize "the Good" or "excellence" (the sequence of virtues was faithfully catalogued by Aristotle in the *Nichomachean Ethics*) as did nature. In fact, the Greeks viewed natural law or *physis* as superior to merely human custom or *nomos*. They reasoned that whereas nature bore the stamp of divinity, cultures and customs were arbitrary human constructs that changed from locality to locality. As such, custom lacked the permanence and constancy of the natural world.

In Jonas's view, the fact that the ancient Greeks believed that nature and humankind inhabited a common world represented a valuable hedge against the temptations of human arrogance: to defile nature was, as it were, to defile a fraternal other. The Greeks practiced a nature religion which expressed their conviction that the natural world was ultimately of divine provenance. To despoil nature was sacrilegious. A greater contrast with modern man's brazenly exploitative attitude toward nature could hardly be imagined.

Taking the Greek, holistic view of nature as his point of departure, in *The Phenomenon of Life* Jonas sought to bridge the fateful Cartesian-scientific opposition between organic nature and modern man. However, to accomplish this feat, Jonas faced a quandary: how might one restore meaning and purpose to nature without regressing to an untenable, speculative, premodern philosophy of nature? His ingenious solution lay with his theory of "metabolism," a function that all organic life—human and non-human—shares in common.

Jonas viewed metabolism as the distinguishing feature of "life." Metabolism—a capacity for self-sustaining biological existence—differentiates organic from inorganic nature. A capacity for self-preservation

separates life from dead or inert being. Via self-preservation life maintains the precarious boundary between animate being and sheer "matter." In one of his riskier formulations, Jonas claims that the struggle for self-preservation, which is common to all life, betrays traces of "subjectivity"—even among the simplest monocellular organisms such as protozoa. By highlighting the commonalities between human and non-human life, Jonas sought to unmask the Cartesian dualism between thinking and extended substance—including the mind/body split—as untenable. The fact that non-human organic life also displays traces of subjectivity or "spirit" provides a basis for viewing other life forms *fraternally* rather than, as with modern science, as stuff of technological manipulation and control.

By the same token, Jonas's conception of "life" as an absolute value risks trivializing our conception of the human good. Instead of setting our sights high, as with the Greeks, and aiming at human flourishing and the realization of "excellence" or "virtue," Jonas's metaphysical vitalism privileges "mere life" or survival over the *summum bonum* or "highest good." By valuing biological life as such—those aspects of life, such as metabolism, that we share with organic nature, what is distinctively *human*—cultural excellence, friendship, the capacity for wisdom, robust communal ties—suffers in comparison. The cost of rashly reintegrating humankind with nature is a diminution of human distinctiveness.

As Jonas developed his philosophical biology, a series of potent new threats to life as we know it emerged. World War II bequeathed two horrific signifiers for future generations to ponder: Auschwitz and Hiroshima. Human history, which Hegel once aptly described as a "slaughterbench," has been replete with massacres and genocides. One of the unique aspects of Auschwitz lay in the industrialized nature of the killing process: its status as a species of assembly-line mass murder. Hiroshima unleashed the specter of *nuclearism*: an invisible force—radiation—capable of distorting, for generations to come, human genetic makeup as well as poisoning the natural environment. Atomic weapons raised the prospect of the elimination of life on earth as we know it. For those schooled in the fine points of biblical prophecy, the apocalypse or "end of days" had become a veritable reality. Since the cold war's end, it has been difficult to recall the mood of dread and trepidation that predominated during the so-called nuclear years. One benchmark of the obsession with the omnipresent threat of atomic death may be found in the popular cinema of the era: films like *On the Beach, Failsafe,*

Dr. Strangelove, and *The Day After*, not to mention the entire gamut of unforgettable fifties "B" horror pictures, from *Godzilla* to *Creature from the Black Lagoon*.

In developing a sophisticated philosophical response to these dislocations and traumas Jonas was far from alone. During the 1950s, fellow Heidegger student Günther Anders published an important two-volume work (regrettably not in English translation) *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen* (The Antiquatedness of Mankind). Anders argued that humanity had been rendered superfluous by dint of its own fantastic technological output, which increasingly outstripped the capacities of its human creators to rein in or control it. The perils of industrial society became a central preoccupation in the later work of Jonas's philosophical mentor, Heidegger, whose 1949 lecture, "The Question Concerning Technology," anticipated many of Jonas's concerns and his approach. (Jonas broke off relations with Heidegger upon his conversion to Nazism in 1933. After years of silence, they finally reconciled in Zurich in 1969).

But the philosopher who, apart from Jonas, undoubtedly went furthest toward contemplating ethics after Auschwitz was Frankfurt School thinker Theodor Adorno. The 1950s were distinguished by an eerie silence concerning the scope and significance of the Nazi death camps—a silence no doubt largely conditioned by trauma. Adorno's forthrightness in lectures such as "What is the Meaning of Working Through the Past?" and "Education after Auschwitz" confronted a timorous German public with the atrocities it had underwritten by supporting a lawless and genocidal dictatorship. In "Cultural Criticism and Society," Adorno famously spoke of the impossibility of writing lyric poetry after Auschwitz. Had not the sinister postwar revelations about the camps virtually destroyed the human capacity for unguarded lyric enthusiasm? In his philosophical masterpiece, *Negative Dialectics*, Adorno placed the experience of Auschwitz at the very center of his philosophy. He realized that, in the history of the West, Auschwitz represented a moral and cultural caesura: a *Zivilisationsbruch*, a breach in the fabric of civilization. He hoped that, henceforth, the horrific realities of Auschwitz would represent a type of negative watershed or template. Accordingly, he sought to place Auschwitz at the heart of a new, Kantian-inspired, anti-authoritarian moral theory. Adorno believed that, in the aftermath of Auschwitz, a new categorical imperative was required: "Hitler has compelled humanity to accept a new categorical imperative: orient your thinking and acting so that Auschwitz would never repeat itself, so that nothing similar would recur."[3]

Jonas's ethical approach in *The Imperative of Responsibility* derived from similar motivations. Jonas began by noting that, previously, human action occurred within familiar and well-defined parameters. Though its consequences may have on occasion provoked unanticipated results, they were rarely catastrophic or unimaginable. *Phronesis*, the Greek approach to ethics, trusted in the wisdom of experience and tradition. But with the advent of modern technology, our horizon of expectations has altered dramatically. Man's interventions in nature have radically unforeseeable results. The traditional relationship between cause and effect no longer seems to hold. In *The Imperative of Responsibility* Jonas stresses this point repeatedly. The danger lies in the fact that, as he puts it, our "causal reach" exceeds our foresight or "prescience." "The discrepancy between the tremendous time-reach of our actions and the much shorter reach of our foresight concerning their outcome is almost bound to grow bigger as we go on with 'big technology,'" he explains.[4] Our actions now threaten to significantly transform the inherited balance between nature and humankind. Our rash consumption of fossil fuels has exponentially increased carbon monoxide emissions, depleting the ozone layer and precipitating global warming, resulting in permanent and potentially calamitous changes in the earth's biosphere. Semi-miraculous medical technologies have resulted in the prolongation of human life. Yet, at the same time they have posed a set of challenging questions about how life should be defined and who among us shall do the defining.

Already in the 1970s Jonas wrote several ground breaking papers on the problem of biological engineering. He recognized that breakthroughs in the area of DNA research coupled with new medical technologies involving invitro fertilization posed a series of unprecedented ethical challenges. Issues related to abortion (do embryos and fetuses have rights?), prenatal intrauterine screening (which, in certain parts of the world, has abetted the abortion of female fetuses), genetic engineering

[3] Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), 365.

[4] Hans Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 117, 118.

(raising the dystopian specter of a eugenically bred master race), and human cloning (is there a right to a unique genetic identity?) all raise the difficult question: at what point does science interfere with our inherited notion of human moral integrity? Or, conversely, do recent advances in biotechnology render our traditional notions of moral autonomy obsolete? How might we go about defining what exactly constitutes the tipping point? As an example of the potential for legal and moral confusion generated by new reproductive technologies, I cite the case of an Illinois judge who sanctioned a wrongful death suit by a couple whose frozen embryo had been accidentally discarded by the fertilization clinic.[5]

For years, George Orwell's anti-totalitarian classic, *1984*, has garnered the preponderance of media-driven scrutiny and acclaim. Now that communism is ideologically spent, perhaps henceforth we should, following Jonas's lead, devote our attention to a competing literary dystopia, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*.

In his ethical writings, Jonas responded to the widespread sense that human moral development has failed to keep pace with the breathtaking tempo of scientific world-mastery. In Jonas's view, modernity's technological reach has increased both the ethical and existential stakes exponentially. We can no longer be certain that the repercussions resulting from a major scientific miscalculation can be regionally or locally contained. In response, Jonas sought to develop a new categorical imperative appropriate to our contemporary "risk society" (Ulrich Beck). This imperative possesses both a negative and positive formulation. The negative formulation reads: "Act so that the effects of your action are not destructive of the future possibility of [human] life." Its positive complement states: "Act so that the effects of your action are compatible with the permanence of genuine human life."[6] These axioms are derived from Jonas's *magnum opus, The Imperative of Responsibility*. There is considerable poetic justice in the fact that it was published in the Orwellian year of 1984.

Humanity's capacity to alter the balance of nature affects not just our species but potentially the *totality of organic life*. Jonas invokes this fact to argue for an ontological extension of our ethical horizon: a

[5] See Jeffrey Rosen, "Roberts v. the Future," *New York Times Magazine*, August 28, 2005:24–51, here 24.

[6] Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility*, 11.

broadening of ethics that would transcend the human realm and encompass *Being as such*. Our dramatically expanded technological capacities must entail a heightened moral responsibility, argues Jonas. Insofar as our potentially lethal technological reach endangers being itself, we must turn ourselves into the custodians or guardians of Being, claims Jonas, thereby clearly echoing his one-time mentor, Heidegger. In this regard, Jonas's philosophical biology is instructive. By stressing the biological similarities between human and non-human life—similarities that center on the notion of *metabolism*, which Jonas defines as our necessary "exchange of matter with the external world"[7]—he makes a compelling argument for the existential kindredness of all organic life, both human and non-human.

By the same token, Jonas's supporters should have no illusions about the radical normative implications of this bold, neo-Aristotelian reconceptualization of ethics. By highlighting humanity's status as a *biological being*, his approach contravenes the Christian tradition which denigrates our bodily capacities and instead perceives humanity's uniqueness in its spiritual side—the dimension of our being that is purportedly closest to godliness.

Jonas's "imperative of responsibility" contradicts another time-honored precept of Western ethical thought: the opposition between "facts" and "values." According to this theorem, articulated in the eighteenth century by Hume and Kant, one cannot derive values from facts. Facts pertain to the way things are. Values pertain to the way things ought to be. Our capacity to transcend "the way things are" in the direction of higher normative ideals is a distinctly human capacity. In Kant's view, this capacity is an expression of our higher, noumenal self. It accounts for our unique status as moral beings.

By predicating ethics on a philosophy of nature, on our kindredness with the totality of organic life with which we share the capacity for metabolism, Jonas self-consciously breaks with the central tenets of modern moral philosophy. Instead, following the later Heidegger, he recasts ethics in ontological terms: ethics must be rethought in light of the characteristics of Being in general rather than in terms of what is distinctively human. As Jonas contends in a 1986 lecture: "Being, in

[7] Hans Jonas, "Toward an Ontological Grounding of an Ethics of the Future," in idem, *Mortality and Morality: A Search for the Good after Auschwitz*, ed. Lawrence Vogel (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 99–112, here 100.

the testimony it gives of itself, informs us not only about what it is but also about what we owe it. Ethics... has an ontological ground."[8] Jonas reasoned that in an era of portentous ecological catastrophe, what is distinctively human merely gets in the way. Human reason is endemically short-sighted. As a rule, we rarely think beyond the time-frame of our own generation. When a long-term ecological crisis is at issue, stiffer medicine is required.

These insights lead to another controversial aspect of Jonas's approach: his attempt to predicate ethics on a so-called "heuristics of fear." According to Jonas, the likelihood of ecological catastrophe renders optimism in humanity's capacity to produce a just and far-sighted moral response a luxury we can ill afford. Given the twentieth century's sorry moral and political track record, Jonas would likely greet Enlightenment shibboleths concerning human perfectibility with bemused condescension. A "heuristics of fear" proposes that, instead of trusting in humanity's capacity to recognize the Good and act accordingly—as in the Socratic maxim, "no one errs willingly" (*Protagoras*, 345e)—only a vivid delineation of worst case scenarios will shake men and women from their endemic moral complacency. From a psychological standpoint, fear is a better motivator than positive incentives. For these reasons, humanity must essentially be scared into doing the right thing.

In this respect, Jonas's ethical thought displays strong affinities with that of Thomas Hobbes, who in *Leviathan* attributed the birth of civil society to the fear of violent death that pervaded the state of nature. But Jonas's political ideas also betray an affinity to Plato's *Republic*: Plato's famous justification of "lying in politics" (*Republic*, Book IX) on the basis of the Guardians' superior insight concerning the essence of Being—insight which the mass of men and women are incapable of attaining. In the interests of political stability, the unenlightened masses or *hoi polloi* must be fed "noble lies." Those who are incapable of discerning the Good on their own must be instructed by the tutelary state's ministry of public enlightenment.

It was to Jonas's credit as a philosopher that he never denied the heretical and unfashionable nature of his ethical views. Instead, he seemed to genuinely relish the untimeliness of his ideas. Still, this fact

[8] Ibid., 101.

should not prevent subjecting them to the critical scrutiny they deserve. Jonas himself wouldn't have it any other way.

It has often been observed that all conservative political thought is predicated on a pessimistic view of human nature: the conception of man as evil, the centrality of original sin. As we have seen, Jonas's thought manifests a deep mistrust concerning human nature. And although there may be strong empirical evidence to support his suspicions, a dilemma arises when one considers what it would mean to translate this standpoint into a viable political program.

The political implications of Jonas's anthropological pessimism present the greatest obstacle to embracing his perspective wholeheartedly. The problems arise in the chapters of *The Imperative of Responsibility* devoted to the problem of political obligation: how we might ensure the cooperation of the great mass of citizens in the responsible, ecologically conscious polity that Jonas envisions. Jonas mistrusts a Kantian-style, deontological ethics: one whose touchstone would be the idea of universal moral legislation. The Kantian version of the categorical imperative reads: "Act such that your maxims for action can become a universal law of nature." Jonas believes this approach is too dependent on the arbitrariness of human will. Instead, he contends that since the family embodies the thickest bonds of human belonging (he treats a parent's relationship to a newborn infant as the paragon of responsibility), political reform should take its cue from it. Once this fact is granted, it is but a short step to argue, as Jonas does, that the parent-child relationship constitutes an acceptable political model.

But the perils and risks of such reasoning are clear. For it suggests that rulers are parent-figures and citizens are, in essence, "children," pliable material that the ruler-parents may mold according to their sovereign insight and higher wisdom. Jonas assumes—prematurely, in my view—that the imminence of ecological catastrophe means that the option of political democracy has played itself out. The mass of citizens cannot be trusted to will the "good." Popular sovereignty is a luxury we cannot afford. His proposals for political reform are worrisome insofar as they toy with authoritarian solutions. In fact, Jonas flirts with the model of educational dictatorship but ignores one of the major objections that have been raised against it: *who shall educate the educators?* If we cannot trust citizens to make informed decisions, what guarantees that a privileged elite can be trusted to do so? Jonas's attempt to model politics upon the parent-child relationship is incompatible with our modern conception of political equality. For the ideal

of popular sovereignty presumes that citizens are implicitly capable of political participation. Self-determination is not merely for an elite but a question of engaged citizenship. On these grounds, we systematically reject an elitist or tutelary conception of politics—even in the case of a purportedly enlightened despotism.

Jonas was hardly naïve about the provocative nature of his political prescriptions. To his credit, he owned up to them forthrightly. In "Toward an Ontological Grounding of Ethics" (1985) he justly inquires whether his framework has in fact conceded too much by prizing the *physical survival* of the species over *freedom*. As Jonas himself muses: "By tolerating tyranny . . . are we not violating the principle [that] the How of existence must not take precedence over its Why?" Yet, in the very next sentence he conjectures that in his model the "*ontological capacity* for freedom" would not be extinguished forever; it would merely be "temporarily banished from the public realm."[9] Still, this remains a chilling thought. We would need compelling empirical evidence of impending bio-evolutionary catastrophe before contemplating such emergency measures as a last resort. As a philosopher, Jonas abstracts from empirical grounds or circumstances. His "imperative of responsibility" assumes the character of a transcendental deduction.

Let me return in conclusion to the alternative ethical paradigm proposed by Jonas's alter ego, Adorno (coincidentally, the two were born in the same year). Adorno realized that one of the factors that led to the German catastrophe, or Auschwitz, was the *Untertan* or "subject" mentality that had been such a prominent feature of traditional German politics and society. Let us merely recall the Second Empire slogan: "authority from above, obedience from below." Adorno realized that the only sure-fire way of preventing future Auschwitzes was the cultivation of autonomous citizens: individuals who no longer merely "followed orders" but possessed a capacity for independent moral judgment. He found the Kantian expression "education toward maturity" serviceable for this program. In "What is Enlightenment?" Kant famously described "autonomy" (*Mündigkeit*) as the "ability to use one's reason without the guidance of another." Those who are still dependent on the guidance of others, such as children, aren't really leading their own lives. As Adorno remarks in "Education Toward Autonomy": "Democracy is founded on the education of each individual in political, social, and

[9] Ibid., 112.

moral awareness. . . . A prerequisite must be the capacity and courage of each individual to make full use of his [or her] reasoning power." "The single genuine power standing against the principle of Auschwitz is *autonomy* . . .: the power of reflection, of self-determination, of not playing along."[10]

Let me conclude by echoing Adorno's conviction that before conceding to the lures of enlightened despotism or benevolent dictatorship, we give the principle of autonomy one more chance.

[10] Theodor W. Adorno, "Education after Auschwitz," in *Critical Models: Interventions and Key Words*, trans. H. Pickford (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 191–204; Theodor W. Adorno and Hellmut Becker, "Education for Maturity and Responsibility," *History of the Human Sciences* 12, no. 3 (1999): 21–34.

PART ONE

A GERMAN-JEWISH INTELLECTUAL

CHAPTER ONE

HANS JONAS'S POSITION IN THE HISTORY OF GERMAN PHILOSOPHY[1]

Vittorio Hösle

For Lore Jonas, without whom *The Phenomenon of Life* and thus also *The Imperative of Responsibility* would not have existed.

Of course Victor Eremita (alias Kierkegaard) is right: the outer is not the inner. And yet frequently we have no option other than to approach the inner via the outer; and even where alternatives exist, the route via the outer may bring us faster and more certainly to the inner than those other means of access, for the inner may very well express itself in an appropriate manner in the outer. Now in the case of thought, the outer always includes the history of its reception. A thinker is only partly responsible for this, for we all know that the reception is frequently unfair and determined by ridiculous coincidences. And yet the history of the reception accorded to a work not only says something about the recipients, but also about what is received. We should therefore start with some reflections on Hans Jonas's reception.

One of the most striking—albeit superficial—aspects of Jonas's philosophy is its very late but rapid rise to world renown. In Germany in particular, Jonas has achieved a level of popularity enjoyed by hardly any other twentieth-century philosopher: Edmund Husserl's thinking was too technical to attract larger circles, and the reasons why Martin Heidegger did not rise to the heights of those authors whom one can quote without problems at public occasions, for example, are all too well known. At any rate, I know of no other German philosopher of the twentieth century to whom a statue has been erected, as in Jonas's home town of Mönchengladbach, and a commemorative postage stamp being issued just ten years after his death is an honor that is likewise not accorded to many German thinkers of our time. Finally, as regards

[1] Translated from the German by Margret Vince.

content too, Jonas's influence on the environmental movement has been considerable.[2]

How can we explain this success, which is all the most puzzling since before 1979, when *Das Prinzip Verantwortung* appeared, Jonas was known principally to experts on the church fathers and Gnosticism as a historian of philosophy and religion? Furthermore, the book that he himself deemed his most important, *The Phenomenon of Life* (original English version 1966, German version published in 1973 under the title *Organismus und Freiheit*), remained largely unregarded until it attracted attention in the wake of discussions surrounding *Das Prinzip Verantwortung*, since it in fact forms the foundation for the arguments of the later work. We also need an explanation for the fact that Jonas's work was initially a success in Germany, even though his language had not kept pace with developments in the German language post-1933, as he himself conceded—in no way coquettishly.[3] In the meantime, it has been well received in many other European and Asian countries—although admittedly hardly at all in the U.S., the country of which Jonas died a citizen, and where he was active for almost four decades of his long life.

One reason for Jonas's success in Germany may be his Jewish origin: by reading and/or praising him, one could believe one was contributing toward reparation for German crimes against the Jews. But insofar as that was a factor, at any rate it did not play a large role, for by no means all emigrant Jewish intellectuals have achieved comparable success. No, it was the content of his work that helped to win him this reception. For one thing, the subject matter played a part—following the first report by the Club of Rome, in the 1970s people around the world began to be aware of the ecological problem for the first time. The fact that at the end of this decade, which was decisive for the recognition of the problem of the environment, a sophisticated theory with the foundations of an ethics for a technological civilization was already available, generated admiring astonishment. Here someone had quite evidently accumulated, over long decades beforehand, a theory to have in readiness,

[2] Jonas's influence extends even into constitutional law; see Jörg Schubert, *Das "Prinzip Verantwortung" als verfassungsstaatliches Rechtsprinzip: Rechtsphilosophische und verfassungsrechtliche Betrachtungen zur Verantwortungsethik von Hans Jonas* (Baden Baden: Nomos, 1998).

[3] Hans Jonas, *Das Prinzip Verantwortung: Versuch einer Ethik für die technologische Zivilisation* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979), 10–11. (Preface to the original German text. The English version was later published as *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984].)

and he now knew how to use it in order to address philosophically an ethico-political question concerning the fate of humanity.

Another contributory factor in the work's success was the fact that when it was published in its original German as *Das Prinzip Verantwortung, The Imperative of Responsibility* presented itself as a counterpart to Ernst Bloch's *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* (*The Principle of Hope*). Conservatives who regarded Marxism with skepticism or even hostility were able to find in Jonas a brilliant critic of high expectations that they rejected for good reasons, and left-wing readers who saw through the destructive tendencies of modern capitalism found in him a confirmation of their concerns. Admittedly, Jonas's defense of the Soviet Union in chapter V of *The Imperative of Responsibility* is one of the most problematic and provocative parts of his work, which he later renounced. But what also impressed intelligent anti-Marxists was the fact that Jonas hoped to deploy Marxist ideology as a noble lie for the masses, in order to win them over to ascetic ideals. With its grandiose blend of Platonism and Machiavellianism, the section "Can enthusiasm for utopia be transmuted into enthusiasm for austerity?," with the characteristic subheading "Politics and Truth," is one of the most subtle texts in political philosophy of the last century. Moreover, the fact that it ended with the words "I am prepared to be accused of cynicism and will not wish to oppose it with the assurance of my good intentions"[4] must have made Jonas interesting to precisely those people who do not regard "being a good person" as the solution to the problem of ethics. At the same time, it was clear to any intelligent reader that this assurance—which would not have helped in the case of one such as Carl Schmitt, since it would have been interpreted only as Machiavellianism of the second order—was superfluous in Jonas's case for quite different reasons: whoever had not yet realized the integrity of this man, and of his thinking, would not in fact have been capable of being convinced by such a declaration either. The fact that at the end of the 1970s, following an extremely ideologized decade, people were fascinated by such an intellectual autonomy, which sought to glean positive aspects from the Soviet Union on the basis of conservative values, was truly a hopeful sign.

Even more important than the subject itself was the way it was treated. Even before Jonas, there had been well-founded inquiries into

[4] Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility*, 148–49.

questions of environmental ethics—one thinks of John Passmore[5]—and it was to be anticipated that following the success of his book, environmental ethics would flourish within academic philosophy (nor was it surprising that even some of the new authors found it necessary to emphasize their good intentions). But what distinguished Jonas's outline from, for example, commendable work such as that by Dieter Birnbacher[6] was the metaphysical claim. It is no exaggeration to say that since Immanuel Kant, there has hardly been an ethicist in whose approach the metaphysics of ethics has played so decisive a role as in the case of Jonas. Utilitarianism for example, regardless of all its material advances beyond Kant, does not belong among the schools of ethics that are characterized by reflections on the status of "ought" (*Sollen*) within "being" (*Sein*).

The new link between metaphysics and ethics was so fascinating because Jonas did not just return to an older position, but justified his return by the present-day situation—the characteristic nature of our duties to future generations, as well as of the necessity of a new interpretation of nature. The fact that the recourse to an apparently obsolete form of thinking was presented in archaic language probably contributed to the appeal of the work. One had the impression that the best of German philosophy, which in 1933 had been driven out or perverted, called, as it were, from a past long thought to have vanished, in order to deal with the future; and this peculiar blend of temporal modes in a disoriented present was surely one of the most decisive factors in Jonas's success.

Jonas's rapid acceptance in Germany and his still tentative reception in the Anglo-Saxon world is also explained by the fact that his philosophy is rooted quite particularly in the German tradition. This is not apparent immediately, since Jonas is not one of those philosophers who discuss their sources and predecessors exhaustively, but as I hope to show below, it does apply.

Jonas's unique position in the history of German philosophy lies in the fact that he knew how to make Heidegger's challenges to world philosophy fertile, and at the same time broke out of the blind alley into which Heidegger's thinking had led philosophy. He succeeded in

[5] John Passmore, *Man's Responsibility for Nature* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974).

[6] Dieter Birnbacher, *Verantwortung für zukünftige Generationen* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1988).

this (not directly, but via "detours," namely through the subject matter itself, as it had revealed itself to him in his dealings with the modern bio-sciences and the ethical problems of their technical consequences) by rethinking the decisive principles of Kantian ethics and Hegelian philosophy of the organic, and applying them to the current situation. For those of us who put forward the thesis that certain basic types of philosophy return in a regular sequence,[7] the fact that a student of Heidegger's had advanced to arrive at the positions of classical German philosophy (and in fact not through historistic learning, but from immanent problems of the present day itself) was a highly welcome confirmation of that general theory of history of philosophy, and of the associated hopes for a renewal of the tradition of objective idealism.

Finally, what made Hans Jonas so interesting to educated Germans was that he engaged in metaphysics with an impartiality and originality such as was hardly possible any longer in Germany, for political reasons. One would have to be, as it were, an American in order to allow oneself this, just as he could allow himself to criticize "liberal naiveté"[8] and to consider the constitutional neglect of subsequent generations in modern democracy[9] only because he had left Germany in 1933 with the pledge "never to return, except as a soldier in a conquering army."[10] Perhaps therein lies one of the most important reasons for the appeal of Jonas's philosophy. With the almost unsurpassed atrocity of National Socialism and Soviet communism, all those political and intellectual alternatives to the Western type of welfare state mass democracy and its consensus-theoretical legitimization which had been considered in various European countries in the first three decades of the twentieth century have been disqualified. On the one hand, that is only too understandable: it is really hardly possible to write a biography of Stefan George, for example, without dealing with the fact that George's elitism fascinated

[7] Vittorio Hösle, *Wahrheit und Geschichte: Studien zur Struktur der Philosophiegeschichte unter paradigmatischer Analyse der Entwicklung von Parmenides bis Platon* (Stuttgart–Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 1984). My thesis has also found support from Robert Brandom's and John McDowell's contemporary variants of objective idealism, which in many ways are complementary to Jonas's philosophy, into which logical, epistemological, and linguistic-philosophical topics have no more found their way than the style of analytical philosophy.

[8] Jonas, *Das Prinzip Verantwortung*, 405 (English version: 239).

[9] Ibid., 55f. (English version: 22f.).

[10] Hans Jonas, *Erkenntnis und Verantwortung* (Göttingen: Lamuv Verlag, 1991), 58. The book contains Jonas's conversation with Ingo Hermann in the series "Zeugen des Jahrhunderts" (Witnesses to the Century).

some National Socialists.[11] But if one regards Hitler as a coincidence, as Jonas did,[12] then the question inevitably arises as to how we would assess Nietzsche, George, and Heidegger, for example, today, if Hitler had not come to power.

It may well be that some of those alternatives, which in logical terms have not the slightest links with totalitarianism, contained ideas from which there is something to learn, particularly in the face of the enormous difficulties that modern democracies have in dealing with environmental problems. Jonas anticipated such a possibility with surprising impartiality, and the thankfulness which the public showed in relation to his work no doubt also had something to do with the sense that here, once again, alternatives to the political correctness of the mainstream were being offered, from which freedom and the breadth of intellectual exchange can profit even if in the end one concludes that they should be rejected.

In the following, I shall first of all outline the legacy of Heidegger in Jonas (I), and discuss the break with Heidegger in philosophy of nature (II) and in ethics (III). In the course of this, I shall deal with the objective relationship to Hegel's and Kant's theories. As I have presented a more precise objective analysis of Jonas's philosophy elsewhere,[13] there is no need for me to provide a detailed presentation and analysis of Jonas's argumentation here. In this text, my concern is only the historical location of Jonas's thinking. At the same time, the topic allows one to touch on the question of whether there is something essentially "German" in the philosophy of the philosopher under discussion.

I

By way of provocation, one can say that for a large part of the general public around the world, with Heidegger's work, classical German philosophy had been taken to its absurd extreme. Just as after the Second World War, one could not talk of a German "special path," and Adenauer's truly historic achievement lay in finally incorporating

[11] I am thinking of the impressive biography by Robert Norton, *Secret Germany: Stefan George and His Circle* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002).

[12] Jonas, *Erkenntnis und Verantwortung*, 81.

[13] Vittorio Hösle, "Ontologie und Ethik bei Hans Jonas," in Dietrich Böhler, ed., *Ethik für die Zukunft: Im Diskurs mit Hans Jonas* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1994), 105–25.

Germany into Western Europe, so it was that following the extreme unconventionality of Heidegger's thinking—and even regardless of his involvement with National Socialism—it was absolutely essential for German intellectuals to concern themselves with the reception of Anglo-Saxon thinking in particular much more intensively than had been the case in the nineteenth century, when, for example, Schopenhauer was one of the few (German) philosophers to have studied David Hume thoroughly. Jürgen Habermas was *the* re-education philosopher of the Federal Republic of Germany (in this respect, his role in philosophy is—even if he would be unhappy to hear it—akin to Adenauer's role in politics), and Karl-Otto Apel's book on Charles Sanders Peirce[14] was a succinct expression of this turn toward the west (including the U.S.). The metaphysical critique of Apel and Habermas, which was supported by their thesis (or rather: their particular interpretation) of the three paradigms of First Philosophy,[15] was no doubt also intended as a contribution toward overcoming the isolation of German philosophy, since it enabled the debate with pragmatism and analytical philosophy, and was to lead to a justification of democracy in terms of intersubjectivity theory. Only a German philosopher such as Jonas, who had lived in English-speaking countries since 1933, could afford to continue to ignore analytical philosophy (although certainly he did learn a great deal from the British philosopher Alfred North Whitehead).

In fact one can concede that a strong interest in metaphysics and a considerably lesser interest in the justification of democracy, if not even an outright rejection of it, were two important features of German philosophy until 1945, and that Heidegger merely exacerbated these tendencies to the point of being unbearable, but in no way did he newly create them. Of course the first part of this statement is problematic, since there is no national spirit as such, i.e., independent of the individuals in which it manifests itself. But it is nonetheless important to point out that particular characteristics are more likely to be found in certain cultures than in others, whatever the causes for that may be. I do not wish to pursue the question here of whether, for example, the separation of a German philosophy in the Middle Ages

[14] Karl-Otto Apel, *Der Denkweg von Charles S. Peirce* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1975).

[15] See for example Karl-Otto Apel, "Metaphysik und die transzendentalphilosophischen Paradigmen der Ersten Philosophie," in *Metaphysik: Herausforderungen und Möglichkeiten*, ed. Vittorio Hösle (Stutgart–Bad Cannstatt: Frommann-Holzboog, 2002), 1–29.

is more than a convenient but ultimately random demarcation[16]—what is clear is that a separate German national philosophy has existed at least since German was used as a specialist philosophical language in the eighteenth century.

Most of its representatives have the following in common: First of all, the religious roots of classical German philosophy are strong, stronger than in France, for example. At the same time, German religiosity is more intellectual than English or even American religiosity: in Germany, philosophical religiosity simply means that one wants to get to the bottom of things in relation to the world, even if that is not in accord with positive religion. In the case of Jakob Böhme, one already sees an extraordinary need to pursue absolute questions related to the nature of God using the means of reason, even if this leads one away from naive orthodoxy, and in German idealism this tendency came to dominate within academic philosophy too.[17] Since at the same time, voluntaristic doctrine on God met with little sympathy, secondly an *a priori* construction of reality became attractive: if God had rational reasons for the creation of this world and no other, it must in principle be possible to deal with the structures of the world through reflection. Even that great German philosopher Kant, who made the most concessions to empiricism, is by British standards a largely *a priori* philosopher, even within the field of theoretical philosophy, to say nothing of practical philosophy, in which he is diametrically opposed to Hume's approach. Thirdly, Kant's anti-eudaemonistic ethics was surely one of the most momentous programs for German philosophy. Fourthly, his call for absolute consistency and the rejection of syncretistic halfhearted positions are formal features that are also found in such an anti-Kantian thinker as Nietzsche. Nietzsche's roots in historicism are obvious, and indeed in the particular interest in history one can discern a fifth characteristic feature of German philosophy. Presumably on the grounds of the speculative emphasis, German philosophy has—sixthly—long scorned to lower itself to the depths of the practical; on account of his doctrine of the right of resistance, it is difficult to extol even such

[16] See Loris Sturlese, *Die deutsche Philosophie im Mittelalter: Von Bonifatius bis zu Albert dem Großen (748–1280)* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1993).

[17] That Jonas's philosophical theology belongs in this tradition is evident. See Thomas Schieder, *Weltabenteuer Gottes: Die Gottesfrage bei Hans Jonas* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1998), and my critique in "Theodizeestrategien bei Leibniz, Hegel, Jonas," in *Leibniz und die Gegenwart*, ed. Friedrich Hermanni and Herbert Breger (Munich: Fink [Wilhelm], 2002), 27–51.

an undisputed universalist and republican as Kant as a thinker who has contributed to the democratization of the Germans.

It is not difficult to recognize most of these features in Heidegger, albeit in a new blend, which was to become fateful.[18] *Sein und Zeit* (*Being and Time*) links, in a highly innovative, even ingenious manner, four philosophical strands which previously existed relatively independently of one another. First of all, *Being and Time* continues the transcendental-philosophical reflections on the relationships between subjectivity and temporality, as begun in Descartes and Kant and raised to a new level by Husserl. Second, in contrast to the early and middle Husserl, Heidegger succeeds in forging a link from these reflections to a theory of historicality, such as formed the center of Dilthey's philosophical endeavors, who in my opinion was more important to Heidegger than Husserl was. Third, the temporality of *Dasein* is intensified to mortality. With this, Heidegger succeeds in making death once again a central theme of philosophy, which it had not been for a long time, and thus also succeeds in ensuring a new existential intensity for philosophy. Fourth, transcendental-philosophical reflection is connected to a rethinking of the question of Being (*Sein*). On the one hand, *Dasein* is characterized by a particular relation to Being, while on the other hand *Dasein* is incorporated into the world and wrenched away from the unworldliness of the Husserlian epoch.

Bringing together such diverse approaches remains one of the greatest achievements in the history of philosophy in the twentieth century: the philosophical greatness of Heidegger, in particular his phenomenological view that opens up new layers of reality is—unfortunately!—unshakable.[19] But it is precisely because of this greatness that Heidegger's constrictions are all the more pernicious. Of particular relevance is the fact that Heidegger's approach dissolves ethics. With him, it is not a question of objective ethics; morality is ultimately reduced to

[18] On Heidegger, see my more detailed analyses in Vittorio Hösle, *Die Krise der Gegenwart und die Verantwortung der Philosophie* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1990), 87ff.; idem, "Heideggers Philosophie der Technik," *Wiener Jahrbuch für Philosophie* 23 (1991): 37–53; idem, "Sein und Subjektivität: Zur Metaphysik der ökologischen Krise," *Prima Philosophia* 4 (1991): 519–41; idem, "The Intellectual Background of Reiner Schürmann's Heidegger Interpretation," *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 19/20 (1997): 263–85.

[19] If one can also recognize a thinker by his fruits, then one must say in Heidegger's favor that he had four original, in part even great, Jewish students; see Richard Wolin, *Heidegger's Children: Hannah Arendt, Karl Löwith, Hans Jonas, and Herbert Marcuse* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

the commandment to face one's own mortality. Through this, *Being and Time* gains the appearance of a particular moral pathos, which is certainly all the more empty in that it is conveyed with none of the usual moral obligations. In Heidegger, what can be consecrated is, for example, that in war, one looks death in the face; but one will search his work in vain for a theory of a just war. And indeed, on the basis of his approach, such a theory is unthinkable. This applies all the more to the late Heidegger, who in the wake of Dilthey, raises the concept of historicality to a theory of the incommensurability of the different manifestations of Being.[20] The view that there is a generally valid moral law is incompatible with this approach, and even less can one conceive of an autonomous ethics within an approach in which a responsible, autonomous subjectivity is, as it were, swallowed up by Being. What is particularly irritating in the later Heidegger is, in turn, that his thinking appears to belong to the metaphysical tradition, which on the one hand is in fact the case, while on the other hand the decisive ideas of the metaphysical tradition, in particular of the connection between metaphysics and ethics, are abandoned, and even turned into their opposite; for Heidegger's Being (*Sein*) is completely value-free. While anyone who holds to that tradition recognizes his enemy in Nietzsche, its perversion by Heidegger is all the more difficult to see through, and thus all the more dangerous, because in part it is effected in the language of that tradition.

There is also the fact that the radical historicism of the late Heidegger paralyzes belief in the ability of human reason to recognize timeless truths, which was traditionally the task of metaphysics. After the sharp turn, Heidegger is not concerned with Being and its structures, but with the way in which Being is experienced in the individual epochs—in other words, he is concerned with the *history* of metaphysics, not with metaphysics. Certainly it is true that in this history of metaphysics according to Heidegger, Being reveals itself (so that his historiography of philosophy remains philosophically inspired). This applies also, and specifically, to the epoch of the most advanced "forgetting of Being" (*Seinsvergessenheit*), namely that of modern technology, whose essence and consequences Heidegger can indeed claim to have seen through like

[20] In my opinion, the best overall description of the implicit system of the later Heidegger is to be found in Reiner Schürmann, *Heidegger on Being and Acting: From Principles to Anarchy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).

hardly anyone else, and earlier than all other philosophers—even if, in the absence of any ethics, he could only capitulate before it.

Where is Jonas's dependence on Heidegger apparent?[21] His first great work, the two-volume *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, opened up anew a little-researched epoch in the history of ideas, through the use of categories that Jonas had taken from Heidegger's analysis of *Dasein*, such as "degraded" (*Verfallen*) and "thrownness" (*Geworfenheit*). Heidegger's influence is no less obvious in *The Phenomenon of Life*. With a certain amount of exaggeration, one can say that the organic form of Being with which Jonas is concerned is a generalization of Heidegger's *Dasein*. Care, one might say, is not peculiar to all organisms, but it can develop only on the basis of the organic form of Being. Anticipation of death presupposes mortality, and that is just the obverse of life. But why? Because life is essentially precarious, namely because of its dependence on metabolism. Life has thus certainly separated from the inorganic through a new form of temporality: through energy exchange and metabolic exchange, temporality is, as it were, immanent in the organism: within a certain amount of time, the organism must exchange a certain amount of energy and material if it is to survive. In a certain sense, Jonas is just radicalizing the transcendence of the Husserlian immanence of consciousness, which was begun in *Being and Time*: "And no matter how far Heidegger distanced himself from Husserl, he nonetheless remained under the influence of the German idealist tradition of recognizing, perceiving, philosophically mastering reality, by looking into oneself.... For example, the sensation of hunger as an internal sensation: one can describe phenomenologically how it is when one feels hunger. But what one cannot figure out through any analysis of consciousness or analysis of *Dasein* is how much a human being, for example, needs in order to remain alive."[22]

Analogously, the deductive power of Heidegger's analysis of Existence is unmistakable in *The Imperative of Responsibility* too. In particular, the theory of responsibility in the central fourth chapter breathes the spirit of *Being and Time*. Of the three characteristics that Jonas ascribes to the concept of responsibility—totality, continuity and future—the latter two concern temporality, and in particular the precedence that Heidegger

[21] On Heidegger and Jonas, see Eric Jakob, *Martin Heidegger und Hans Jonas: Die Metaphysik der Subjektivität und die Krise der technologischen Zivilisation* (Tübingen: Francke, 1996).

[22] See Jonas, *Erkenntnis und Verantwortung*, 100f.

ascribes to the future continues to have an effect in the case of Jonas: sections IV and V of the fourth chapter explore the significance of the future for the concept of responsibility. Even more decisive is Jonas's insistence on the fact that there can be responsibility only for entities (*Seiendes*) of an organic mode of being, since only these are essentially endangered and transient. It is true that Jonas acknowledges an artist's responsibility for his work; but says that this exists only in view of possible human recipients of the work; and in the famous quandary, of course the child should be saved from the burning house before the Sistine Madonna.[23]

In general, the following should apply: "only what is alive, in its constitutive indigence and fragility, *can* be an object of responsibility."[24] Against the Platonic preference for what is lasting, on the basis of which responsibility could not have become the central concept of ethics, Jonas emphasizes:

> But the ontology has changed. Ours is not that of eternity, but of time. No longer is immutability the measure of perfection: almost the opposite is true. Abandoned to "sovereign becoming" (Nietzsche), condemned to it after abrogating transcendent being, we must seek the essential in transience itself. It is only in this context that responsibility can become dominant in morality.[25]
>
> Not *sub specie aeternitatis*, but rather *sub specie temporis* must responsibility look at things; and it can lose its all in the flash of an instant.[26]

For Jonas, responsibility is "the moral complement to the ontological constitution of our *temporality*."[27]

II

In *The Phenomenon of Life* (published first in English, then later in a German version entitled *Organismus und Freiheit*),[28] Jonas describes how his study of the history of Gnosticism, inspired by Heidegger's philosophy,

[23] Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility*, 100.
[24] Ibid., 98.
[25] Ibid., 125.
[26] Ibid., 135.
[27] Ibid., 107.
[28] Hans Jonas, *Organismus und Freiheit: Ansätze zu einer philosophischen Biologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973), 292ff. (English original version published as *The Phenomenon of Life: Toward a Philosophical Biology* [New York: Harper & Row, 1966]).

gradually brought him to the realization that Heidegger's philosophy was itself historical. Its categories were thus not so generally valid, but limited to a particular historical situation of human beings. In some ways, Jonas's experience was similar to that of that other great student of Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer: the intensive, philosophically guided concern with history necessarily had to result in the realization of the historicality of historicism itself. In contrast to Gadamer, his realization of the historicality of historicism led to the acknowledgement of a timeless sphere as the legitimate object of philosophy.[29]

It remains a sign of a quite special mental agility that on this basis, Jonas now took on the task of rejustifying philosophy of nature or, to be more precise, that part of philosophy of nature that deals with the organic. Instead of following Heidegger's example of dealing with the categories that underpin the different constructions of nature in the various epochs of western history, or—like the theory of science—of regarding the scientific approach to nature as the only legitimate approach to nature, Jonas's reflections on nature were *intentione directa*—even if in *The Phenomenon of Life*, reflections on the history of the biological sciences continue to play an unusually large role. In this respect, Jonas returned to the phenomenology of his first teacher, Husserl, and since at the same time he was open to metaphysical speculation,[30] he could also go back, without any inhibitions, to Aristotle, Spinoza, and Leibniz, for example.

There was *one* practical lesson that Jonas brought with him from his studies in Gnosticism—the rejection of any radical dualism. In fact this is one of the reasons why Jonas turned to the philosophy of the organic: he was interested in it not just for local ontological reasons, but because he believed that in this area, he could learn something important for a general ontology—an adequate capturing of the organic would, for example, refute a dualistic metaphysics of the type offered by Descartes.[31]

Here, there is now common ground between Jonas and those two thinkers in whom his philosophy of the organic is most readily

[29] See Hans Jonas, *Wandel und Bestand: Vom Grunde der Verstehbarkeit des Geschichtlichen* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1970).
[30] See Jonas, *Organismus und Freiheit*, 4.
[31] See for example my interview with Hans Jonas—available in print only in an Italian translation: "Anima & corpo: Conversazione di Vittorio Hösle con Hans Jonas," *Ragion pratica* 15 (2000): 53–64.

prefigured: Aristotle and Hegel, both of whom likewise rebelled against the dualisms of their predecessors, Plato and Kant. There is of course a significant difference between Aristotle and Hegel on the one hand and Jonas on the other, in that only they have presented a truly comprehensive system of philosophy that attempts to do justice to all layers of being; but it is nevertheless still true that for Aristotle and Hegel too, the philosophy of the organic is more than a merely local discipline, and has consequences for the overall structure of their philosophy. In *De anima*, the psychology is biologically founded, and it is not entirely without reason that another student of Heidegger's, Herbert Marcuse, claimed to see in Hegel's philosophy of life the origins of his theory of dialectics.[32]

As in Aristotle and Hegel, in the case of Jonas too, on the one hand the philosophy of mind rises above a philosophy of the organic. And on the other hand, as with his two predecessors, in the case of Jonas too the philosophy of biology is aimed at the mind, in the sense that the organic is characterized by a dimension of inwardness, which had unjustly been blanked out by cybernetic biology.[33] For all three, the mind is the "natural" continuation of the organic, but this does not make their philosophy naturalistic because the organism is conceived of as being aimed at the mind. Yes, all three philosophers see in the organism something especially valuable, indeed practically a manifestation of the divine in the world (which does not mean, in the case of any of the three, that God is to be found only within the world).

It is noteworthy that Jonas followed the Darwinian reorganization of biology in every respect, but that at the same time he emphatically, and quite rightly, defends those elements of traditional philosophy of biology that only superficial thinking would deem incompatible with Darwinism—I mean for example the theory of the *scala naturae*.[34] Of particular density are his thoughts on the difference between animals and plants, which are prefigured not only in Aristotle and Hegel,[35] but also in the only slightly older Max Scheler and Helmuth Plessner. The most original are Jonas's analyses of the nature of the organic, which

[32] Herbert Marcuse, *Hegels Ontologie und die Grundlegung einer Theorie der Geschichtlichkeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1932).

[33] See Hans Jonas, *Organismus und Freiheit: Ansätze zu einer philosophischen Biologie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973), 164ff.

[34] Ibid., 12–13.

[35] See in this regard, Vittorio Hösle, *Hegels System* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1987), 2: 320ff.

place metabolism at the center. As Jonas was well aware, this also plays an important role in Aristotle's and Hegel's philosophy of biology,[36] but is subordinate to the teleonomy of form and of reproduction. The reliance of the organic on the surrounding world, from which it must at the same time differentiate and contrast itself, is for Jonas one of those antitheses that determine life, such as those "of being and not-being, of self and world, of form and substance, of freedom and necessity."[37] Herein lies a clear proximity of Jonas's dialectic to Hegel's, for all that Hegel has expanded thinking in antitheses and their respective syntheses to the whole of philosophy, and for all that he claims to have a method of *a priori* formation of concepts that is alien to Jonas's descriptive-phenomenological approach. The evident advantage of the Hegelian approach is that it has at least the beginnings of an answer to the question of when the construction of a philosophical area is complete.

Even if Hegel's and Jonas's philosophy of the organic are surprisingly similar, both in respect of their position in the whole of the respective philosophical conception and in respect of numerous details, Jonas felt a deep-rooted mistrust of the Hegelian system—perhaps the effects of his early reading of Schopenhauer were making themselves felt here.[38] Jonas rejected the use of dialectics for the purpose of a metaphysical success story particularly in the area of philosophy of history, since he saw no possibility of gleaning any meaning from the crimes of the twentieth century, and indeed viewed such attempts as an insult to the victims—for example his mother, who was murdered in Auschwitz. "The disgrace of Auschwitz is not to be charged to some all-powerful providence or to some dialectically wise necessity, as if it were an antithesis demanding a synthesis or a step on the road to salvation. *We* human beings have inflicted this on the deity, we who have failed in the administering of his things. It remains on our account, and it is we who must again wash away the disgrace from our own disfigured faces, indeed, from the very countenance of God. Don't talk to me here about the cunning of reason."[39]

[36] See Jonas, *Erkenntnis und Verantwortung*, 101.

[37] Jonas, *Organismus und Freiheit*, 16.

[38] See on this Jonas, *Erkenntnis und Verantwortung*, 28.

[39] Hans Jonas, "Matter, Mind, and Creation: Cosmological Evidence and Cosmogonic Speculation," in idem, *Mortality and Morality: A Search for the Good after Auschwitz*, ed. Lawrence Vogel (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 165–97, here 188.

III

It was not only a comprehensive system construction, but also the specifically transcendental mode of thinking that remained alien to Jonas. In his critique of epiphenomenalism, transcendental arguments play a part,[40] but presumably Jonas has also taken on Heidegger's distaste for transcendentalism, and in fact on the basis of the false assumption that transcendental arguments would lead to subjectivism. Now certainly Kant's theoretical philosophy shows a combination of transcendentalism and subjectivism, but his practical philosophy can certainly not be described as subjectivist.

In fact it is the case that the central intuitions of Jonas's ethics are Kantian, even if this is not readily apparent to the reader of *The Imperative of Responsibility* in view of Jonas's polemic against Kantian formalism.[41] Nonetheless, Jonas has said of the first sentence of *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten* (*Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*), which he read early on, that it "resounded like a thunderclap through my life."[42] It is this thunderclap that has preserved him from the moral and ethical paralysis that emanated from Heidegger's thinking, and has enabled him to present the most innovative theory besides discourse ethics in German postwar philosophy, which took a long time merely to see what was desirable in a practical philosophy.

Jonas's lasting achievements in ethics lie in having highlighted first of all the objectivity of moral obligations, and secondly their irreducibility to the well-understood self-interest—and here we are dealing with two decisive ideas of Kant's.[43] According to Jonas, reciprocity no longer applies in the case of intergenerational obligations; and in general in ethics it is a matter of backing up categorical, not hypothetical,

[40] Hans Jonas, *Macht oder Ohnmacht der Subjektivität?* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1981), 62ff. An awareness of the transcendental difference between a thing and the conditions of its possibility is to be found in idem, *The Imperative of Responsibility*, 33–34.

[41] Ibid., 10ff. and 88ff.

[42] Jonas, *Erkenntnis und Verantwortung*, 28. In this connection, Jonas also mentions the Jewish prophets in whom Hermann Cohen rightly recognized the precursors of Kantian universalism. Indeed, in *The Imperative of Responsibility* one senses a certain characteristically prophetic style.

[43] On the other hand, John Rawls attempts to trace his theory of intergenerational justice, which was published several years before Jonas's, through the fiction of a primordial state back to an equilibrium of rational-egotistical beings. See my critique in Vittorio Hösle, *Moral und Politik: Grundlagen einer politischen Ethik für das 21. Jahrhundert* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1997), 787ff.

imperatives.[44] Eudaemonism is thus surrendered to Aristotelian ethics, and even the non-hypothetical imperatives of utilitarianism and discourse ethics are rejected in terms of their material content, since in the agreement and sense of well-being of later generations that is bought at the expense of the dignity and vocation of the human being, Jonas not only sees nothing positive, but even an increase in the culpability of the earlier generations responsible for it.

> It means that in the final analysis we consult not our successors' *wishes* (which can be of our own making) but rather the "ought" that stands above both of us. To make it impossible for them to be what they *ought* to be is the true crime, behind which all frustration of their desires, culpable as it may be, takes second place. This means, in turn, that it is less the *right* of future men . . . than their *duty* over which we have to watch.[45]

Jonas's critique of Kant is surely unfair to the extent that Jonas discusses only one of the various formulations of Kant's categorical imperative, and does not see that Kant seeks to derive from the other formulations material contents that are not too far removed from those of Jonas. Yes, it may even be the case that Jonas's alternative categorical imperative—"Act so that the effects of your action are compatible with the permanence of genuine human life"[46]—not only does not surpass Kant, but even falls short of him, since it perhaps is insufficient to justify individual rights—at any rate, that depends on its interpretation.[47] And the justification of Jonas's imperative is quite obscure in *The Imperative of Responsibility*—curiously, an appeal to intuitions[48] is to be found at the end of a complex argument, according to which not only purposes, but also values are to be found in nature.

The argument is not easy to reconstruct, but at its center seems to be the notion that the character of life as an end in itself must be an important purpose of nature itself, a good in itself or a value,[49] since it is not possible to negate purposiveness itself, without making

[44] Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility*, 38ff. However, Jonas confuses hypothetical imperatives and conditional dictates.

[45] Ibid., 41–42.

[46] Ibid., 11.

[47] See for example the critical view of Karl-Otto Apel, "Verantwortung heute—nur noch Prinzip der Bewahrung und Selbstbeschränkung oder immer noch der Befreiung und Verwirklichung von Humanität?" in idem, *Diskurs und Verantwortung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988), 179–216, especially 195–96.

[48] Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility*, 130ff.

[49] Ibid., 74.

this negation itself a purpose. Jonas says: something may be relatively good—in other words, only good *de facto*, but not *de jure*—merely in the light of actual purposes, but in the case of purposiveness in itself, things are different.

> We can regard the mere *capacity* to *have* any purposes at all as a good-in-itself, of which we grasp with intuitive certainty that it is infinitely superior to any purposelessness of being.[50]

Jonas leaves open whether this is an analytic or a synthetic sentence, and he fluctuates between appealing to the evidence of the sentence and using an apagogic argument: the doctrine of nirvana is self-contradictory, since it makes the freeing from all purposes a purpose itself. In fact, Jonas believes that the impossibility of a negative judgment is insufficient to commit one to an affirmative judgment,[51] and thus that sentence remains ultimately axiomatic with him. But whoever thinks more highly of apagogic justifications than Jonas does will see in those reflections the argumentative core of *The Imperative of Responsibility*.

In contrast to the transcendental-pragmatic ultimate justification of ethics, for example, Jonas's argument now appears to open up possibilities for an ethics that is not strongly anthropocentric, in other words does not ascribe value only to humans. Jonas's remarks on nature's own moral law are very cautious,[52] and one senses that he is pleased that the question does not arise in practice, "since...the interest of man coincides...with that life as his worldly home in the most sublime sense of the word."[53] And yet it is clear that on the basis of Jonas's philosophical biology, it is very difficult to deny the living entity an inherent value: on the one hand, the continuity of the biotic evolution to which humans essentially belong, and on the other hand that uniqueness of the organic, so fascinating ontologically, prompts us to take it into account in any axiology. Indeed, herein lies an enormous point of progress made by Jonas beyond Kant, for whom nature, including and in particular the organic, remains a human construct in that which is recognizable in it, and thus void of any intrinsic value.

As we have already remarked, Jonas did not present a comprehensive philosophical system. But in an age of ever-increasing specialization,

[50] Ibid., 80.
[51] Ibid., 77.
[52] See ibid., 8 and 45–46.
[53] Ibid., 136.

he not only dealt with two very different disciplines, philosophy of biology and ethics, in a highly original way, but also made many links between them clear. Jonas's originality lies essentially in the fact that he developed further Heidegger's depth analysis of temporality as well as his critique of the modern technological era, into an ontology of nature and an ethics which, following Heidegger's diagnosis of the present day, seeks to offer a remedy. In this, in part without realizing it himself, he returned to decisive theoretical constituents of the philosophy of nature of German idealism and of Kant's ethics; and in a world that no longer expected much from German-language philosophy, he demonstrated the present-day form—and even the relevance for the future—of an apparently antiquated tradition.

To exaggerate somewhat, one could say that in his thinking and in his language, Jonas preserved not only the best of pre-fascist Germany, but was probably also the last German national philosopher—before national philosophies opened up into a world philosophy, which was conducted, decisively, in the medium of the English language. That the last German national philosopher was a Jew with a U.S. passport was naturally a particularly painful experience, albeit one that pointed toward a higher justice, since it showed that the extinguishing of the German soul was quite decisively a consequence of the National Socialist destruction of Judaism.

CHAPTER TWO

HANS JONAS IN MARBURG, 1928

Steven M. Wasserstrom

1. *"The Thrill of This Dimly Felt Affinity"*

> When, many years ago, I turned to the study of Gnosticism, I found that the viewpoints, the optics as it were, which I had acquired in the school of Heidegger, enabled me to see aspects of gnostic thought that had been missed before. And I was increasingly struck by the familiarity of the seemingly utterly strange. In retrospect, I am inclined to believe that it was the thrill of this dimly felt affinity which had lured me into the gnostic labyrinth in the first place.[1]

My subject concerns this thrill, this affinity, as the student Hans Jonas "turned to the study of Gnosticism," and handed his *Promotionsschrift*, "Der Begriff der Gnosis," to Martin Heidegger in Marburg, autumn 1928.[2] My theme is this twenty-five-year-old's ambitious revivification of Gnostic myth, especially its successfully enriched formulation in *Die mythologische Gnosis. Mit einer Einleitung zur Geschichte und Methodologie der Forschung. Band 1: Gnosis und spätantiker Geist* (hereafter *Gnosis*).[3]

"The point of this discussion is still the same I tried to make long ago in my first study of Gnosticism: that it is *the meaning context, taken in its wholeness and integrity*, which matters, and not the traffic in single

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[1] Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), 320. I thank the Dean of the Faculty of Reed College, Peter Steinberger, and the Stillman Drake Fund for making this research possible. Some of the research undertaken here was done at the Institute for Advanced Studies at the Hebrew University, for which support I am grateful. Jacob Vahid Brown made countless contributions to this work, for which I am extremely grateful.

[2] The present essay complements that of Kurt Rudolph, "Hans Jonas und die Gnosisforschung aus heutiger Sicht," in *Hans Jonas—von der Gnosisforschung zur Verantwortungsethik*, ed. Wolfgang Erich Müller (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2003), 25–41.

[3] Pursuant to an interest announced in my article published twenty years ago, "The Moving Finger Writes: Mughira ibn Sa'id's Islamic Gnosis and the Myths of its Rejection," *History of Religions* 25 (1985): 1–29.

symbols, figures, and names."[4] Put in his own terms, I seek the "meaning context" of the student Jonas at the moment of his embarkation, when he was launching into his breakthrough. That breakthrough had its meaning context in *Marburg, 1928*.

> Let us think back to the 1920s, to that great, tension-filled time when the theological turn away from historical and liberal theology was made, when the philosophical rejection of neo-Kantianism took place, when the Marburg school was dissolved, and when new stars rose in the philosophical heaven.

Gadamer opens his nostalgic essay, "The Marburg Theology," with this report from the age of titans.[5] The immediately preceding, quickly fading giant, was Hermann Cohen. Hans Jonas, like all German-Jewish intellectuals in this period, had no choice but to confront, first of all, the Marburgian neo-Kantianism of Hermann Cohen. The supernova birth of continental philosophy, *Sein und Zeit*, split the constellations of Cohen and Heidegger. Jonas crossed that sidereal divide in Marburg 1928, at the moment "when the Marburg school was dissolved, and when new stars rose in the philosophical heaven." Educated Jewishly, active Zionistically, and inclined religiously, Jonas nevertheless, at just this moment, fled the blessed isle of German-Jewish religiosity, Hermann Cohen's ethicism.[6] The young Jonas then immediately proclaimed the recovery of nothing less than a religion, a religion, ironically, that had been—in the formulation of Scholem endorsed by Jonas—"the greatest case of metaphysical anti-semitism."[7]

[4] "Response by Hans Jonas," in *The Bible in Modern Scholarship: Papers read at the 100th Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, December 28–30, 1964*, ed. J. Philip Hyatt (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1965), 279–93, here 286 (emphasis added).

[5] Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Heidegger's Ways*, trans. John W. Stanley (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994), chapter 3.

[6] Jonas knew how high the stakes were in his choice. See Michael Brenner, "Gnosis and History: Polemics of German-Jewish Identity from Graetz to Scholem," *New German Critique* 77 (1999): 45–60.

[7] For the very notion that Gnosticism is a "religion," see Birger A. Pearson, "Is Gnosticism a Religion?," in *The Notion of "Religion" in Comparative Research: Selected Proceedings of the XVIth Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions, Rome, 3rd–8th September, 1990*, ed. Ugo Bianchi (Roma: "L'Erma" di Bretschneider, 1994), 105–14. Deutsch believes that Jonas was "perhaps the first scholar to describe Gnosticism as a religion in its own right"; see Nathaniel Deutsch, *The Gnostic Imagination: Gnosticism, Mandaeism, and Merkabah-Mysticism* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995), 30. "[The] nature of the relation of Gnosticism to Judaism—in itself an undeniable fact—is defined by the anti-Jewish animus with which it is saturated. 'The greatest case of metaphysical anti-Semitism!' exclaimed Scholem once when we talked about these matters soon after the appearance of my first volume on Gnosis" ("Response by Hans Jonas" [see n. 4 above]).

[8] Rudolf Otto, *Das Heilige* (Breslau: Trewendt und Granier, 1917), trans. John W. Harvey as *The Idea of the Holy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1928).

[9] Richard Reitzenstein, *Die hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen*, 3rd ed. (Leipzig and Berlin: B. G. Teubner, 1927), 3.

2. *Religionswissenschaft 1928*

The present essay concerns genealogical implications of this counterintuitive choice for what was called *Religionsgeschichte* or *Religionswissenschaft*. In this connection, proximity to Rudolf Otto, also teaching at Marburg, would seem more apposite than the two mentors invariably exploited in Jonas studies, Heidegger and Bultmann. However, Jonas never mentioned Otto in his memoirs, and more broadly, showed no evidence of interest in "experience" of the "holy" as set forth by *The Idea of the Holy*.[8] In other words, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, one of the more singularly influential works in the history of religions, was not written as a work in the history of religions.

Adapted nonetheless to an especially complex transition in the study of religion, *Gnosis* was multidisciplinary to its fingertips. In its fulfilled form in the 1934 published version, *Gnosis* was an almost expressionistic brewing of competitively intense ingredients: Orientalism (part of a larger *furor orientalis*), classics (its citations in the original Greek and Latin), philology (*de rigeur*), theology (Bultmann), philosophy (Heidegger), and history (Spengler).

In mixing this recipe, Jonas approximated the culinary blend of Richard Reitzenstein, whose third edition of his *Hellenistic Mystery Religions* appeared in 1927, beginning with these words: "It is with a sense of sincere gratitude, but also of mild anxiety, that I respond to the invitation to speak as a philologist in a theological circle on a topic in the history of religions."[9] In 1928 it seemed inescapable to "taste" Gnosis without implementing a combination of philology, theology, and history of religions, as did Jonas and Reitzenstein. Jonas's study of *Poimandres* in his survey of Gnostic myths was beholden to Reitzenstein, then still in ascendance. And, with Reitzenstein, Schaeder published the enormously influential *Studien zum antiken Synkretismus, aus Iran und Griechenland*.

This is not the place to rehearse the tangled historiography of Gnostic studies.[10] What I hope to show is that *Religionswissenschaft* in 1928 was thick in the midst of a complexifying breakthrough. Jonas was one of a cohort, employing a parallel array of disciplines, collectively retrieving Gnosticism from the ash-heap of history. Following senior scholars like Reitzenstein, young non-Jewish scholars moving into Gnostic studies in this period most notably included Hans Heinrich Schaeder, Erik Peterson, and Werner Foerster, all of whom published groundbreaking monographs on gnosis in the fraught year 1928.

Werner Foerster's thesis on Gnosis, *Von Valentin zu Herakleon: Untersuchungen über die Quellen und die Entwicklung der valentinianischen Gnosis*, was submitted in 1928 at Giessen.[11] In 1936, Foerster published alongside Schaeder in a volume on salvation in world religions. Foerster's essay, "Die Erlösungshoffnung des Spätjudentums," remained squarely centered in the shared discourse of concerns of Jonas's and Schaeder's studies on late antiquity.[12] In contrast to Schaeder's compromise, Foerster's accommodation to the Third Reich is unclear.[13]

Erik Peterson (1890–1960), scholar and theologian, is most remembered today for his *Der Monotheismus als politisches Problem: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der politischen Theologie im Imperium Romanum*.[14] Peterson published a particularly influential article on Mandean religion, construing it as a major form of Gnosticism, in 1928.[15] In that year, Peterson was moving

[10] Convenient points of departure have recently been provided by Michael Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism": Arguments for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); and Karen L. King, *What is Gnosticism?* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

[11] Werner Foerster, *Valentin zu Herakleon: Untersuchungen über die Quellen und die Entwicklung der valentinianischen Gnosis* (Giessen: A. Töpelmann, 1928); Foerster contributed many articles to the *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1933). Also in this period Foerster wrote his *Herr ist Jesus: Herkunft und Bedeutung des urchristlichen Kyrios-Bekenntnisses* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1924). During the war he published *Neutestamentliche Zeitgeschichte* (Berlin: Furche-Verlag 1940).

[12] Franz Gustav Taeschner, ed., *Orientalische Stimmen zum Erlösungsgedanken*, in Gemeinschaft mit W. Foerster, A. Rücker, H. H. Schaeder, Fr. Schmidtke (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1936), 7–24. See also Werner Foerster, "Ursprung des Pharisäismus," *Zeitschrift für die neutestestamentliche Wissenschaft* 34 (1935): 35ff.

[13] I have been unable to consult Heinrich Bornkamm, *Volk, Staat, Kirche: Ein Lehrgang der Theologischen Fakultät Gießen* (Gießen: A. Töpelmann, 1933).

[14] Erik Peterson, *Der Monotheismus als politisches Problem: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der politischen Theologie im Imperium Romanum* (Leipzig: Hegner, 1935). Comprehensive documentation on Peterson's career is available online at the Peterson site, http://www.bistummainz.de/bm/opencms/sites/sonderseiten/epeter/index.html.

[15] Erik Peterson, "Urchristentum und Mandäismus," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 27 (1928): 55–91. Also in 1928, Schaeder made a contemporaneous contribution to Mandaean studies in his "Zur Mandäerfrage," *OLZ* (1928): 163–71. Jonas dealt with it throughout *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*. For the subsequent vicissitudes of the Mandaean question, see Jorunn Jacobsen Buckley, *The Mandaeans: Ancient Texts and Modern People* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

away from theological studies in such topics as pietism, asceticism, and mysticism, which he had published in the immediately preceding years since receiving his doctorate in 1920. In fact, before 1928 he had published only one short article on gnosis.[16] He subsequently followed it, especially through the forties and fifties, with a series of substantial papers dealing variously with "the Gnostic problem." Peterson's major scholarly accomplishment, *Frühkirche, Judentum, und Gnosis* (1959) collected these papers.[17]

Most notable of these was Orientalist Hans Heinrich Schaeder (1896–1957), teacher of Jonas's Jewish friends Hans Lewy, Hans Jakob Polotsky, and Leo Strauss (for all of whom Schaeder wrote letters of reference to the Rockefeller Foundation, thereby providing means to escape Germany). Jonas and Schaeder shared the burgeoning Weimar German interest in gnosis, which they construed broadly as the spirit of late antiquity and for which they employed a broad but parallel variety of sources ranging from Manichaean to Hermetic, from Valentinean to Mandean gnosis. To some substantial extent it was Schaeder, both in terms of raw research and in terms of refined terminology, who led the vanguard. Perhaps the most influential piece that Schaeder published, "Der Orient und das griechische Erbe," appeared in 1928.[18]

Introducing the section *Erlösungsreligion und Humanismus,* in which he laid out his theory of gnosis, Schaeder implicitly agreed with Jonas on the general significance of gnosis for understanding the spirit of the age.[19]

"Unter dem Begriff der Gnosis"—in 1928, Schaeder was generalizing "Begriff der Gnosis"—the title, after all, of Jonas's *Promotionsschrift* in the same year. Schaeder, however, did so not from the perspective

[16] Erik Peterson, "Bemerkungen zur mandäischen Literatur," *Zeitschrift für neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 25 (1926): 236–48.

[17] Erik Peterson, *Frühkirche, Judentum und Gnosis. Studien und Untersuchungen* (Freiburg: Herder, 1959; repr., Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1982).

[18] Hans Heinrich Schaeder, "Der Orient und das griechische Erbe," *Die Antike* 4 (1928): 226–65, reprinted in idem, *Der Mensch in Orient und Okzident* (Munich: Piper, 1960), 107–60. I hope to return to a sustained study of the reception of this essay on another occasion, in the context of a monograph on the life and works of Schaeder.

[19] Ibid., 137 (emphasis added).

of Heidegger's existentialism but rather from that of Werner Jaeger's Third Humanism.

On important elements of their analysis they nonetheless concurred. Like Jonas, Schaeder saw the characteristic drive of Gnosticism to revive myth, now as the very philosophy of late antique Hellenism.[20] Schaeder's reconstruction of Gnostic myth itself, alas, has not weathered well. Its decline was already marked by his student, Carsten Colpe, in his 1961 thesis, *Die Religionsgeschichtliche Schule: Darstellung und Kritik ihres Bildes vom gnostischen Erlösermythos.*[21] To be sure, Schaeder in his day spearheaded among Orientalists "the philological-humanist movement of thought that was dominant between 1925 and 1935."[22] Among other things, he embodied this movement's contemporaneous recoil from its Jewish exponents. Schaeder, for example, delivered a lecture on "Der Manichäismus nach neuen Funden und Forschungen" in Münster on April 17, 1936, but neglected even to mention Jonas's 1934 *Die mythologische Gnosis*.[23] This silence is especially noteworthy given that Jonas had engaged Schaeder at some length, specifically on his treatment of Manicheanism.[24] Jonas, as did Thomas Mann, openly engaged Schaeder in his appropriation of Gnostic myth, which appropriation Schaeder pointedly ignored.[25]

In sum, Jonas, alongside cohorts that included Schaeder, Foerster, Peterson, Lewy, Polotsky, Kraus, and Scholem, was starting in 1928 to build the dominant twentieth-century construction of Gnosticism, which survived into the 1990s.

[20] Ibid., 146–47.

[21] Carsten Colpe, *Die Religionsgeschichtliche Schule: Darstellung und Kritik ihres Bildes vom gnostischen Erlösermythus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961). For the biblical school, see Archiv "Religionsgeschichtliche Schule," at Theologische Fakultät der Georg-August-Universität, Göttingen, accessed at http://www.user.gwdg.de/~aoezen/Archiv_RGS/index.htm.

[22] I take the characterization from Arnaldo Momigliano, *Studies on Modern Scholarship*, ed. Glen W. Bowersock and Tim J. Cornell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 181.

[23] Franz Taeschner, ed., *Orientalistische Stimmen zum Erlösungsgedanken* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs Verlag, 1936), 80–109.

[24] See Carsten Colpe's discussion of this *Auseinandersetzung* in "Nachwort; Kurze Charakteristik der Mani-, Bardesanes- und Esra-Forschungen von 1927–1967," in *Studien zur orientalischen Religionsgeschichte*, ed. Hans Heinrich Schaeder (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968), 253–82, here 261.

[25] In *Gnosis*, 49–58, Jonas criticized at length what he considered Schaeder's "graecozentrischen und neohumanistischen Blickpunkt" (in Kurt Rudolph's characterization).

3. *Furor Orientalis 1928*

The title of Suzanne Marchand's recent essay, "Philhellenism and the *Furor Orientalis*," captures the overheated admixture of Hellenism and Orientalism in the "philological-humanist movement" as it was coming to a boil in the Weimar twenties.[26] The latest theories of Gnosisticism combined the trajectories of Hellenism and Orientalism. Jonas begins his *Gnosis* with a chapter titled "Einleitung—Ost und West im Hellenismus," and its first sentence invokes the conquests of Alexander the Great as "einen Wendepunkt in der Geschichte der antiken Welt" (a turning point in the history of the ancient world). Here he reflected the dominance of Hellenism in the intellectual framework of his culture.[27]

Both Jonas and Schaeder were reacting, more generally, to Adolf von Harnack's construction generally of late antiquity, and specifically of gnosis.[28] Harnack construed gnosis influentially as "the acute secularization or *Hellenization* of Christianity."

> The results already produced by the interchange of Oriental religions, including that of Israel, were technically termed, a century ago, 'the Oriental philosophy of religion.'... We have a more definite grasp of the complex itself ... which we owe chiefly to Christian gnosticism. Nowhere else are these vague and various conceptions worked out for us so clearly and coherently.[29]

Schaeder's mentor, the Islamicist and politician Carl Heinrich Becker (1876–1933), extended Harnack's Hellenization a step further, into the rise of Islam. As Becker put it epigrammatically, "*No Alexander the*

[26] Suzanne Marchand, "Philhellenism and the *Furor Orientalis*," *Modern Intellectual History* 1 (2004): 331–58.

[27] On which see Eliza M. Butler, *The Tyranny of Greece over Germany: A Study of the Influence Exercised by Greek Art and Poetry over the Great German Writers of the 18th, 19th, and 20th Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935); and Suzanne L. Marchand, *Down from Olympus: Archaeology and Philhellenism in Germany, 1750–1970* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

[28] On Islam as a product of Gnosis in the Harnackian trajectory of historiography, see Steven Wasserstrom, *Between Muslim and Jew: The Problem of Symbiosis under Early Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 37–38.

[29] Adolph (von) Harnack, *The Mission and Expansion of Christianity in the First Three Centuries*, trans. and ed. James Moffatt, enlarged and revised English edition, Theological Translation Library 19–20 (London: Williams and Norgate / New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1908). From the 2nd German edition, *Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten* (1902, revised 1906, 1915, 1924), accessed online at http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/rs/rak/courses/535/Harnack/bk1ch3.htm.

Great, no Islamic civilization!"[30] Becker was one of the main influences on Weber's conception of Islam.[31] Harnack's theory of acute Hellenization also had its impact on Rudolf Bultmann, Jonas's other primary teacher alongside Heidegger. Finally, Harnack's *Marcion* was crucial to Jonas's development.[32]

"World-historical" lucubrations sketched (broadly if no less portentously) in the twenties dissertations of Jonas and Schaeder descended equally from Harnack, with an intermediate coloration added by Oswald Spengler.[33] Schaeder and Jonas saw both Gnosis and Islam as "major manifestations of the Oriental wave in the Hellenistic world."[34] And both sought keys to the spirit of and, finally, the end of antiquity.

4. *Kultur 1928: Becker, Cassirer, and Warburg*

Meanwhile, the then Prussian Minister of Culture Becker was reorganizing the university system.[35] Becker was an institutional giant of cultural influence who played a critical role in the careers of a number of the players to be discussed here, including Jaeger, Mann, Hesse, Warburg, Schaeder, and Cassirer.[36] Conversation on gnosis, as it were, echoed through the most hallowed halls of *Kultur*. Respected leaders of *Kultur*, such as Aby Warburg, Carl H. Becker and Ernst Cassirer, along with such luminaries as Edmund Husserl, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, and

[30] Carl Heinrich Becker, "Der Islam als Problem," *Der Islam* 1 (1910): 1–21, here 16.

[31] Bryan S. Turner, *Weber and Islam* (London: Routledge, 1974), 16.

[32] For a valuable *status quaestionis*, see the essay by, Michel Tardieu, "Marcion depuis Harnack" in Adolf von Harnack, *Marcion: L'Évangile du Dieu étranger: Une monographie sur l'histoire de la fondation de l'Église catholique*, trans. Bernard Lauret, Guy Monnot and Émile Poulat (Paris: Cerf, 2003).

[33] For Jonas, see his *Erinnerungen: Nach Gesprächen mit Rachel Salamander*, ed. Christian Wiese (Frankfurt: Insel, 2003), 150. Schaeder wrote a review of Spengler in his first year of publication. See Hans Heinrich Schaeder, "Spengler-Literatur," *Die Grenzboten* 4 (1920): 152–54. Spengler remained an important influence throughout his life.

[34] In Schaeder's 1922 review of Reitzenstein's 1921 *Das iranische Erlösungsmysterium*, the twenty-five-year-old Schaeder precociously noted the themes he elaborated throughout the following decade. See *Deutsche Literaturzeitung* 43 (1922): 318–21.

[35] In addition to being perhaps a leading Islamicist, Becker served as minister of culture in Prussia, 1919–1925.

[36] A convenient overview of his life and works can be found in the *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon*, vol. 25 (2006), by Sabine Mangold, accessed at http://www.bautz.de/bbkl/b/becker_c_h.shtml.

Werner Jaeger, are each relevant if one is to fully and in the round "grasp" Marburg 1928.

In 1928, another thinker of broad intellectual influence, Ernst Cassirer, offered a defense of Weimar at the university's celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Republic. In 1929–1930 he served as the rector of the university, the first Jew to hold such a position in Germany.

Jonas seems in certain not insignificant respects closer to Cassirer than to his own teacher, Cassirer's 1929 Davos opponent, Martin Heidegger. An apparent example of this proximity can be found in Jonas's section of *Gnosis* devoted to "Gnostische Bildwelt und symbolische Sprache."[37] Cassirer's 1925 *Das Mythische Denken*, the second volume of his masterpiece *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, had recently grappled with the function of myth in "symbolic speech." Indeed, Jonas's notion of mythic objectification is not far from Cassirer's. Jonas's teacher Rudolf Bultmann famously asserted that "Myth objectifies the other-worldly in the this-worldly."[38] As Ricoeur summarized Bultmann, "Myth does not express the projection of human power into a fictitious beyond but rather man's grasp on his origin and end, which he effects by means of this objectification, this putting in worldly form."[39] In Cassirer's 1927 "The Problem of the Symbol and its Place in the System of Philosophy," he analogously broached a theory of symbolic objectivation: "In the religious sphere where the concept of the symbolic is originally rooted, it appears above all to be taken in a purely thing-like and thoroughly 'objective' sense."[40] As Jonas, in his later essay "Myth and Mysticism: A Study of Objectification and Interiorization in Religious Thought," summarized, "Myth taken literally is crudest objectification; myth taken allegorically is sophisticated objectification; myth taken symbolically is the glass through which we darkly see."[41] Jonas's governing idea, myth

[37] Hans Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 2: 75–135.

[38] See Jonas's discussion in "Is Faith Still Possible?," in idem, *Mortality and Morality: A Search for the Good after Auschwitz*, ed. Lawrence Vogel (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 144–64, here 148.

[39] Preface to Rudolf Bultmann's *Jesus, mythologie et demythologisation* (Paris: Ed. du Seuil, 1968), accessed online at http://www.religion-online.org/showchapter.asp?title=1941&C=1771.

[40] Cassirer, "The Problem of the Symbol," 411.

[41] Hans Jonas, "Myth and Mysticism: A Study of Objectification and Interiorization in Religious Thought," *The Journal of Religion* 49 (1969): 315–29, republished in *Philosophical Essays: From Ancient Creed to Technological Man* (Englewood Cliffs NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1974), 291–304.

as objectivation, then, seems closely related, substantially if not filially, to Cassirer's thought.

In addition to establishment giants of contemporary *Kultur* operating on the one hand as educational leaders like Becker or Cassirer, others, like Aby Warburg, on the other hand, sought extra-institutional goals outside the academy.[42] Warburg supported the work of several of the scholars under discussion here. For example, Becker in his 1931 "Das Erbe der Antike im Orient und Okzident," explicitly honored his student and colleague Schaeder, who in 1926 had published with Richard Reitzenstein their influential *Studien zum antiken Synkretismus, aus Iran und Griechenland* as volume seven of the series *Studien der Bibliothek Warburg*. In "Das Erbe der Antike im Orient und Okzident"—written expressly with Schaeder's "Der Orient und das griechische Erbe" in mind—Becker championed *Kulturgeschichte* as indexed to the *Nachleben* of Hellenism, a formulation closely reminiscent of Warburg's parallel commitment to recovering the *Nachleben* of antiquity.[43]

When Becker entered politics he ended his active practice of Islamic studies.[44] This removal from active research may account, in part, for the obvious expropriation of Schaeder's gnostocentrization of late antiquity by one so notable as a Prussian *Kulturminister*, in a survey so global as "Das Erbe der Antike im Orient und Okzident." But what is especially notable, even striking, is just *what* Becker selected from Schaeder.[45] As I will try to show, precisely this particular selection of Schaeder was also paralleled by Shlomo Pines, Thomas Mann, and Hans Jonas.

Cassirer was at this time temporarily atop the university system, which heights Jonas presumably aspired to climb. Aby Warburg, by contrast, could afford to work outside of it. Warburg's own work was typified by

[42] For this period see Dorothea McEwan, *Ausreiten der Ecken: Die Aby Warburg—Fritz Saxl Korrespondenz* (Hamburg: Dölling & Galitz Verlag, 1998).

[43] Carl Heinrich Becker, *Das Erbe der Antike im Orient und Okzident* (Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1931).

[44] As suggested by Josef van Ess, "From Wellhausen to Becker: The Emergence of Kulturgeschichte in Islamic Studies," in *Islamic Studies: A Tradition and Its Problems*, ed. Malcolm H. Kerr (Malibu, CA: Undena Publications, 1980), 27–53.

[45] On the relationship of Schader and Becker see Steven M. Wasserstrom, "Hans Heinrich Schader's Geopolitical Turn (1938–39): 'Deutsche Wirklichkeit' and World-historical Confrontation with Islam," forthcoming. The paper was delivered at a conference on "Islam and the History of Religions: The Legacies of Ignaz Goldziher, Ernest Renan, and Julius Wellhausen and the Study of Islam" at the Central European University, in Budapest, Hungary in May 2007.

"Astrology under Oriental Influence," published in 1926.[46] "*Nachleben* of antiquity" is the leitmotif of Warburg's project as much as it was for Becker and Schaeder. This project was underway at the moment under discussion: Warburg put a name to his flagship *Mnemosyne* project in 1928.[47] Moreover, Cassirer worked at the Warburg library during the years that Schaeder was published by the Warburg Institute. Cassirer, more specifically, was working in 1928 on the (posthumously published) fourth volume of his *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*. Jonas, like Cassirer and Warburg, strove to demythologize, to "take myth symbolically."

The "meaning context" for *Die mythologische Gnosis* included the thought of *Kultur* doyens Cassirer, Warburg, and Becker. The young Jonas likewise sought an Archimedean "objective correlate" in order effectively to engage the present in terms other than those of the present. For him, Gnostic myth "taken symbolically" was a subjective, or existentialist text read self-reflexively in its objective "meaning context."

5. *Demythologization 1928*

Freshly reconstructed, philologically demystified gnostic myth, "myth taken symbolically," epitomized the epochal act of demythologization in 1928. Jonas modified the word "gnosis" with the word "myth," *Die* mythologische *Gnosis*. Guy Stroumsa has suggested that Gnosticism, in fact, was the last great myth of antiquity.[48]

Demythologization went far beyond Orientalism and philology. The intellectual journalist Siegfried Kracauer's much discussed 1927 essay, "The Mass Ornament," submitted a philosophical brief for what he, just prior to Jonas, likewise called *demythologization*.[49]

[46] Aby Warburg, "Orientalisierende Astrologie," a lecture delivered as the "Wissenschaftlicher Bericht über den Deutschen Orientalistentag, Hamburg vom 28. Sept. bis 2 Okt. 1926, veranstaltet von der Deutschen Morgenländische Gesselschaft, Leipzig 1927"; published in *Die Erneuerung der heidnischen Antike: Kulturwissenschaftliche Beiträge zur Geschichte der europäischen Renaissance* (Laipzig: B. G. Teubner, 1932), 2: 559–65; translated as "Astrology under Oriental Influence," in *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity: Contributions to the Cultural History of the European Renaissance*, trans. David Britt (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1999), 699–702.

[47] Dorothea McEwan, ed., *Wanderstraßen der Kultur: Die Aby Warburg—Fritz Saxl Korrespondenz von 1920 bis 1929* (Hamburg: Dölling und Galitz Verlag, 2004).

[48] Guy Stroumsa, *Another Seed: Studies in Gnostic Mythology* (Leiden: Brill, 1984).

[49] Siegfried Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, ed. and trans. Thomas Levin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 75–88.

> After the twilight of the gods, the gods did not abdicate: the old nature within and outside man continues to assert itself.[50] It gave rise to the great cultures of humanity, which must die like any creation of nature, and it serves as the ground for the superstructures of a *mythological* thinking which affirms nature in its omnipotence.[51]

Kracauer here contrasted myth with Reason, "whose concern is to introduce truth into the world." While the struggle between Myth and Reason is cosmic, itself mythic, the allegiance of the modern is unmistakable. "In serving the breakthrough of truth, the historical process becomes a *process of demythologization* which effects a radical deconstruction of the positions that the natural continually reoccupied."[52]

Kracauer was Adorno's senior and in certain respects influenced what Adorno was to accomplish with Horkheimer in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.[53] Jonas, Kracauer, and Adorno, from disparate points of view, agreed on demythologization as key. It might not, in fact, be too indefensibly overreaching a generalization to assert the following. German-Jewish thought at its Weimar apogee turned on demythologization—which could also take the form, paradoxically, of *re*mythologization. Of those who championed some sort of return to myth, Oskar Goldberg and Gershom Scholem may be the most notable.[54] Otherwise, the espousal of myth was left to fascist reappropriation, against whose aggressions all were obliged to respond one way or the other. Fascists were asserting

[50] Habermas summarizes *Dialectic of Enlightenment* on precisely this formulation, giving proper credit to Weber where Kracauer and Jonas do not. "Thus, Horkheimer and Adorno play a variation on the well-known theme of Max Weber, who sees the ancient, disenchanted gods rising from their graves in the guise of depersonalized forces to resume the irreconcilable struggles between the demons." See Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987), 110.

[51] Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament*, 79 (emphasis in original).

[52] Ibid., 80 (emphasis in original).

[53] For Kracauer's influence on Adorno, see Dagmar Barnouw, *Weimar Intellectuals and the Threat of Modernity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988). The most discussed philosophy of demythologization was to be Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung: Philosophische Fragmente* (Amsterdam, 1947; typescript published earlier at New York and Los Angeles: Institute of Social Research, 1944); English translation, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Herder and Herder, 1972).

[54] Even though Scholem was a sworn enemy of Goldberg. Willi Goetschel has neatly noticed that Scholem "responds nicely to people who are on the other side of the gap, and he attacks people who are actually close to his position." See Willi Goetschel, "A Jewish Critic from Germany: Hermann Levin Goldschmidt," in *German Literature, Jewish Critics: The Brandeis Symposium*, ed. Stephen D. Dowden and Meike G. Werner (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2002), 149–65, here 157.

a new myth, applying literally in the world of action the presumptive and originally-merely-metaphorical world-historical obligation *to make myth live again.* Young intellectuals like Siegfried Kracauer sensed the danger here. Kracauer's politically engaged *feuilletons* date from exactly this period. In Levin's summation, these journalistic essays "map the return of myth across a wide spectrum of high and low culture, in the renaissance of religiosity, in youth movements and body cults, in philosophy, and in cultural criticism."[55] Almost a manifesto, Kracauer's foundational statement in this regard was "The Mass Ornament" of 1927:

> The production process runs its secret course in public. Everyone does his or her task on the conveyer belt, performing a partial function without grasping the totality. Like the pattern in the stadium, the organization stands above the masses, a monstrous figure whose creator withdraws it from the eyes of its bearers, and barely even observes it himself.[56]

Gertrud Koch is correct, I think, in her reading of this passage. "This relapse into mythology is inscribed in the mass ornament. This is its obverse, whereby it considers the 'monstrous figure' as *a type of hidden Gnostic God* and therefore Creator... a hidden God... the hypnotic Svengali Joe of the masses."[57] In other words, the contemporaneous relapse into Gnostic myth seemed to contemporary observers to be implicitly fascistoid. Obviously, Heidegger's student did not put it in such terms.

6. *Living Gnostic Myths of the Weimar Twenties*

Kracauer's Marxist critique of the "pattern in the stadium" saw in the "organization" a "monstrous figure." He was not alone in addressing a perceived terror of the modernizing moment expressed in terms of gnosis. Prominent among those who similarly "sublated" myth were

[55] Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament*, 18.

[56] Ibid., 78.

[57] Gertrud Koch, *Siegfried Kracauer: An Introduction*, trans. Jeremy Gaines (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 34 (emphasis added). For more on the Gnosticism in Kracauer's thought of this time, see Miriam Hansen, "Decentric Perspectives: Kracauer's Early Writings on Film and Mass Culture," *New German Critique* 54 (1991): 47–76.

Thomas Mann, Carl G. Jung, Hermann Hesse, Hans Heinrich Schaeder, and Oskar Goldberg.

Two pseudonymous books in German, both of a Gnostic confessional character, were published by Nobel Prize winners during Jonas's graduate studies. Thomas Mann and Hermann Hesse reenvisioned Gnostic myths with a nearly irresistible mystique. They thereby provided another conceptual clustering, another vortex of existential concerns, another "meaning context," for Jonas's *Promotionsschrift*.

"A Myth for Our Time" is how a Mann biographer titles his chapter on Mann's *Joseph and His Brothers*.[58] On June 11, 1927, Mann had sent a letter to Jakob Horovitz (1874–1939), rabbi in Frankfurt am Main, seeking detailed information on biblical matters, especially those pertaining to the Joseph saga. That he was already at work on the project Mann himself indicated first in print at the time.[59] While, then, the first volume of *Joseph* did not see print till October 1933, when Fischer Verlag brought out *The Young Joseph*, Mann was already synthesizing his own Gnostic myth throughout the fateful year 1928. Between 1928 and 1934, when Jonas published his *Gnosis*, this aspiring Jewish doctoral student and the titanic mandarin were simultaneously refining their respectively extensive explorations of Gnostic myths.

Situated saliently in the first pages of his vast tetralogy, section eight of Mann's "Prelude: Descent into Hell" comprises a mere six paragraphs. A little more than a page in length, section eight is a spare, more-or-less unadulterated Gnostic myth. It is now well established that Mann "discovered" this very old myth of the descent of the soul in a very recent article by the young Orientalist Hans Heinrich Schaeder. Schaeder had published his "Die islamische Lehre vom Vollkommenen Menschen, ihre Herkunft und ihre dichterische Gestaltung" in 1925, at the age of twenty nine.[60] Himself a highly accomplished historian of religions, and of course a novelist soon to receive the Nobel Prize in 1929, Mann was interested in and capable of studying it profitably,

[58] Anthony Heilbut, *Thomas Mann: Eros and Literature* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1996), 536–66.

[59] In *Berliner Tageblatt*, April 26, 1928; and in "Ein Wort zuvor: Mein 'Joseph und seine Brüder'," as cited in Paul Bishop, "Thomas Mann and C. G. Jung," in *Jung in Contexts: A Reader*, ed. Paul Bishop (New York: Routledge, 1999), 187, n. 47.

[60] Hans Heinrich Schaeder, "Die islamische Lehre vom Vollkommenen Menschen, ihre Herkunft und ihre dichterische Gestaltung," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 79 (1925): 192–268.

as indeed he did. Schaeder sent an inscribed copy of it to Mann on September 1, 1926.

7. *Digression on Razi*

Shlomo Pines, student of Schaeder, observed that

> Thomas Mann's perhaps only half ironical theological reflexions set forth in this section of the novel [i.e. the Prelude] are principally based [on Schaeder's article]. . . . Schaeder's rendering of *'aql* by *Geist* was utilized by Mann in a way which conformed to a view which enjoyed considerable vogue in Weimar Germany, for he interprets the "*Geist*" of the myth as the principle of death (*das tödliche Prinzip*, *ibidem*, p. 31).[61]

In 1974, in this remarkable footnote (number 244) to his "Shi'ite Terms and Conceptions in Judah Halevi's *Kuzari*," Pines recalled that Schaeder's myth was itself a scholarly re-creation, a synthetic reconstruction of the cosmogony of the tenth-century Abu Bakr al-Razi (d. ca. 925). Razi himself might have inherited it from so-called "Sabians" who in turn (so goes conjecture) got it from ancient Gnostics. In other words, if Pines was correct, this fictionalized origin myth lay at six degrees of separation from any putatively original version promulgated by ancient Gnostics—tracing backwards from Mann to Schaeder to Nasir-i-Khousrau to Razi to Sabians to Gnostics.[62] In this psychological intimacy and in this historical distance, to be sure, Mann's gnosis was not alone.

It is worth repeating, I think, that both Mann and Pines appropriated Razi's myth simultaneously from Schaeder. At the time he sent his offprint to Mann, Schaeder was serving as director of Pines's dissertation, *Beiträge zur Islamischen Atomenlehre*.[63] Of the 133 pages in this text, a chapter of some sixty pages was devoted to "Die Atomenlehre des Razi." Pines published his first major article, primarily devoted

[61] Shlomo Pines, "Shi'ite Terms and Conceptions in Judah Halevi's *Kuzari*," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 2 (1980): 165–251, here 205 n. 244.

[62] Schaeder delivered a lecture on "Nasir I Chousrau und die islamische Gnosis" around 1925 but apparently never published it.

[63] *Beiträge zur Islamischen Atomenlehre* was published in Berlin in 1936 (two years later under the Third Reich than Jonas was!). Fortunate enough to have continued his working relationship with his *Doktorvater* through acceptance of this thesis, Pines, on the other hand, was required in his printed *Lebenslauf*, to declare "Ich bin Jude." Pines nonetheless on the opposing page gave his teacher "mein besonderer Dank."

to Razi, in 1937.[64] Another student of Schaeder's, and one of Pines's closest friends, Paul Kraus, was soon to publish his own "Raziana" in 1935.[65]

I might recapitulate the point of this digression. *Both Mann and Pines extracted one page, the Razi myth, from Schaeder's lengthy article.* Both Mann and Pines then placed that singular myth, the brief synopsis written by Nasir-i-Khousrau of Razi's descent of the soul myth, near the head of their respective masterworks. Both Mann and Pines read their Schaeder very closely indeed. Grimstad observes, for example, that

> Mann marked one of the footnotes in which Schaeder drew a connection between the exaltation of the youthful being of light in the ancient Orient and homoerotic worship of the divine youth in the contemporary circle surrounding the poet Stefan George. Schaeder asserted, "all dieser Aberwitz hat nicht, wie seine Hierophanten behaupten, in der griechischen Klassizität, gar bei Platon, sein Gegenbild, sondern in der Dekadenz der orientalischen Gnosis" [This nonsense has its counterpart not in classical Greek culture and in Plato, as its hierophants maintain, but in the decadence of Oriental Gnosticism] (253).[66]

This myth of the soul, I suggest, for Mann and Pines as well as for Jonas, was essentially philosophical. Such selectivity was in turn consistent with what Jonas argued for the "original" Gnostics, that their myths "with their personifications, hypostases, and quasi-chronological narrative, [were] consciously constructed symbols of metaphysical theory."[67] Jonas was making analogous choices himself, at the same time. *The dramatization of a philosophical choice*, a choice of Gnostic narrativization and musicalization of late antiquity's demands; the tragic myth of rationalization run awry; of its conflicts and internal tensions and inherent inconsistencies retrojected into a cosmic saga unfolding, madly if beautifully, inside the dying divine.

In his footnote 244, published in 1974, Pines was reconfirming the Schaeder triangulation he shared at the outset with Mann. Schaeder, Mann, and Pines relied centrally on a scholarly re-creation of putative myth, a version that itself probably never existed in this form

[64] Shlomo Pines, "Some Problems of Islamic Philosophy," *Islamic Culture* 11 (1937): 66–80.

[65] Paul Kraus, "Raziana," *Orientalia* 4 (1935): 300–34.

[66] Note 32 of the first chapter of Kirsten J. Grimstad, *The Modern Revival of Gnosticism and Thomas Mann's Doktor Faustus* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2002), online at www.antiochla.edu/pdf/grimstad_t.mann_matrix.pdf.

[67] Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), 236.

and thus was in essence a philosophical fiction, an allegory, and not a myth *per se*.[68] What the triangulators shared in common was their more-or-less simultaneous impulse to privilege a specific version, this particular "descent of the soul" narrative. It is no small matter that their common lineage devolved from a philosophical choice and not a naïve myth, a choice which was probably an invention of Razi's, that is, a philosophical invention from the tenth century and not a "real" myth of the ancient Gnostics.[69]

In his dissertation on *Sefer ha-Bahir* published in 1923, Gershom Scholem neglected a Gnostic reading in his close commentary on that curious book.[70] However, by the time that he published *Ursprung und Anfänge der Kabbala* in 1962, Scholem's vastly amplified analysis of *Bahir*, which occupies the majority of pages in this latter study, was explicitly and extensively devoted to a Gnostic reading.[71] Their cohort sought to put an "end to metaphysics." Pines, on a parallel track, emphasized Razi's anti-metaphysical advances. "The acceptance of even one of these propositions would bring about the toppling-over of the delicately balanced edifice of Aristotelian physics: and could not but have repercussions even in the domain of Peripatetician metaphysics."[72] Pines, moreover, saw a "common conceptual denominator" to Gnostic myths. His comments on the Razi myth note that it "corresponds, in its general outline, to the cosmogonical myths of the majority of gnostic systems, provided they are stripped of their purely fanciful elements and reduced as it were to their common conceptual denominator."[73] In other words, it was generalizable.

[68] Without descending even deeper into an irretrievable obscurity—deep, deep is the well of the past—I add that Razi's myth was attributed to the Sabians. Here, however, I can only answer an obscurity with a greater obscurity, given the incapacity of scholarship to crack the conundrum of Gnostic continuity with regard to the Sabians.

[69] For example, Lenn Goodman, "Razi's Myth of the Fall of the Soul: Its Function in His Philosophy," in *Essays in Islamic Philosophy and Science*, ed. G. Hourani (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1975), 25–40; and Sarah Stroumsa, *Freethinkers of Medieval Islam: Ibn al-Rawandi, Abu Bakr al-Razi and Their Impact on Islamic Thought* (Leiden: Brill, 1999).

[70] Gershom Scholem, *Das Buch Bahir: Ein Schriftdenkmal aus der Frühzeit der Kabbala auf Grund der kritischen Neuausgabe* (Leipzig: W. Drugulin, 1923).

[71] Gershom Scholem, *Ursprung und Anfänge der Kabbala* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1962); expanded and translated as *Origins of the Kabbalah*, ed. R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, trans. Allan Arkush (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1987).

[72] Pines, "Some Problems of Islamic Philosophy," 75.

[73] Ibid., 76.

Schaeder (b. 1896) was twelve years older than Pines (b. 1908) but only seven years older than Jonas (b. 1903). At the same time, Becker, Mann, and Hesse, ministers and Nobelists, much older and already fully mandarinized, also sought Gnostics' "common conceptual denominator," itself a theme key to Jonas and Schaeder's work. Such was *the dramatization of a philosophical choice* they made in 1928. Jonas belonged to a culture ranging from novices like Pines all the way to the peaks of *Kultur*, to Hesse, Mann, and Becker, who together generalized a world-historical Gnostic religion transforming antiquity and now radically remaking their own time too.

Here, then, another brick in the edifice of the "meaning context" for Jonas in Marburg 1928.

8. *Mann and Hesse*

In his composition of the "Prelude," Mann apparently was also influenced by, in addition to Schaeder, Jung's *Seven Sermons to the Dead*. Summarizing his extensive comparison of these two texts, Paul Bishop concludes that "Mann's opening 'Descent into Hell' recapitulates the central tenets of *Seven Sermons to the Dead* and other Jungian works."[74]

Crackling through the cultural atmosphere, then, were two Gnostic myths, written, or "received," several years earlier; Jung's *Sermones* (written in 1915–1916 but published pseudonymously in 1916) and Hesse's *Demian*, (written in 1916–1917 but published pseudonymously in 1919). In both cases, a revelation was "channeled" during a heightened psychiatric condition, almost like a prophecy. Hesse had undergone therapy by a Jungian disciple from June to November 1916, resulting in *Demian*, written in a few months in 1917. Jung received his revelation of *Seven Sermons to the Dead* in the summer of 1916, culminating in "*The Seven Sermons to the Dead* written by Basilides of Alexandria, but now transcribed by Carl Gustav Jung."[75] Excluded from the *Collected Works* but famously attacked by Martin Buber, the *Sermons* are perhaps the best

[74] Bishop, "Thomas Mann and C. G. Jung," 173.

[75] It is perhaps not entirely inapt to emphasize that Jung's revealing master was Basilides. A short time later, in 1932, Borges published his "A Defense of Basilides the False."

evidence of Jung's personal Gnosticism.[76] In his defense against Buber, Jung claimed that he had merely "perpetrated a poem in his youth," when in fact the *Sermons* were written when he was in his forties, and are only crudely at best to be considered poetry.[77]

In both of these Gnostic myths, Abraxas is the god at the center of an annunciatory dream, a dream announcing the return of myth.[78] Thus the revelation in *Demian*, "Der Vogel kämpft sich aus dem Ei. Das Ei ist die Welt. Wer geboren werden will, muss eine Welt zerstören. Der Vogel fliegt zu Gott. Der Gott heisst Abraxas."

Mann and Hesse did not speak of it with each other, at least not in these terms. However, in 1927 Carl Becker invested Thomas Mann into the Literature Section of the Prussian Academy (founded in 1926). Mann in turn invited Hesse into the Literature Section.

Both Nobel Prize winners wrote their respective Gnostic myths as "psychoanalytic novels." *Demian* emerged from Jungian psychoanalysis and *Joseph* was written during the years in which Mann was most immersed in Freud. Hesse's son, in fact, accused Gilles Quispel of accusing Hesse of plagiarizing *Demian*'s Abraxas myth from Jung's *Sermones*.[79]

One could go on. What is clear is that by 1932 contemporaneous observers were speaking of "Der Neu-Gnostizimus unserer Tage" as a generational event.[80] Jonas himself described the appeal of Heidegger's analogous innovation. "This breathless dynamism held a tremendous appeal for the contemporary mind, and my generation in the German twenties and early thirties succumbed to it wholesale."[81] Mann similarly conjures the impact of *Demian* on Jonas's generation.

[76] Guy G. Stroumsa, "Buber as an Historian of Religion: Presence, Not Gnosis," *Archives des Sciences Sociales des Religions* 101 (1998): 87–105.

[77] One of Jung's Gnostic interests, that of *Aion*, was also studied importantly by Schaeder. See Hans Heinrich Schaeder, "Der iranische Zeitgott und sein Mythos," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 95 (1941): 268–99.

[78] I leave aside Serrano's perfidious *C. G. Jung and Hermann Hesse: A Record of Two Friendships*. Serrano propagandized for "Esoteric Hitlerism."

[79] Quispel states that the relationship of *Demian* to the *Sermones* "must be obvious to everyone who has read both works." Gilles Quispel, "Jung and Gnosis," in Robert A. Segal, *The Gnostic Jung* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 219–38, here 222.

[80] Anna L. Matzka, cited in Benjamin Lazier, "Redemption Through Sin: Judaism and Heresy in Interwar Europe" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2003), chapter 2, draft p. 12 n. 23.

[81] Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, 337.

> The electrifying influence exercised on a whole generation just after the First World War by *Demian*, from the pen of a certain mysterious Sinclair, is unforgettable. With uncanny accuracy this poetic work struck the nerve of the times and called forth grateful rapture from a whole youthful generation who believed that an interpreter of their innermost life had arisen from their own midst.[82]

To be sure, Jonas knew Mann's work.[83] Jonas's 1928 thesis, then, emerged out of a literary and psychological context too.

9. *Return to Myth*

Both analysis and literature positioned themselves for the *descensus ad infernos* to recover *primordium*, that of the *Urmensch*, or *Anthropos*, or Perfect Man. The struggle to become this man, which strife comprised the philosophical posture of their shared myth, was to be obtained not cognitively but experientially. One thinks of the transformational deconstruction of the self of *Steppenwolf*'s "Magic Theater—Entrance Not for Everybody."[84] *Steppenwolf* was published in 1927.

Jonas himself recalled the impulse

> It was my experience, when first encountering scholarship in the realm of religion, that placing the Prophets in their time and world, turning them from the flat homiletic figures of the sacred texts into flesh-and-blood characters, made them more alive for us—closer to, not farther from, the present—and left intact the natural miracle: that they could exist at all.

[82] Thomas Mann, introduction to Hermann Hesse, *Demian*, trans. Michael Roloff and Michael Lebeck (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), ix.

[83] Hans Jonas, *Erinnerungen: Nach Gesprächen mit Rachel Salamander*, ed. Christian Wiese (Frankfurt: Insel, 2003), 101–2.

[84] The expressionist Magic Theater of Gnostic myth is said by some to be captured in Borges's "Library of Babel"—and now in the Web, where digitalization intends to be globally inclusive, containing, like that Library, everything: "all the possible combinations of the twenty-odd orthographical symbols (a number which, though extremely vast, is not infinite): Everything: the minutely detailed history of the future, the archangels' autobiographies, the faithful catalogues of the Library, thousands and thousands of false catalogues, the demonstration of the fallacy of those catalogues, the demonstration of the fallacy of the true catalogue, *the Gnostic gospel of Basilides*, the commentary on that gospel, the commentary on the commentary on that gospel, the true story of your death, the translation of every book in all languages, the interpolations of every book in all books." See Jorge Luis Borges, *Collected Fictions*, trans. Andrew Hurley (New York: Penguin Books, 1998), 112–18, here 115 (emphasis added).

> This was my first recognition of the fact that historical scholarship, for all its distancing, can also be a means of heightened appropriation.[85]

Jonas's "heightened appropriation" in some sense sought *"to make myth live."* "[Experimental imagination must] *make* what is real": thus went the famous manifesto produced by the Surrealist André Breton.[86] This *Hunger nach Mythos* may be attributed to a hunger for renewal on the part of young intellectuals, of an avant-garde "that, in an elitist manner, wants to stage a myth of total renewal"[87] *This staging of a myth of total renewal*, required a leap from the unexceptional into a realm where the "aesthetic desire for the exception . . . becomes the foundation of a theory which has the formation of reality as its goal."[88]

Jonas, however, remained within the orbit of science, within the orbit of philology—though, to be sure, he let philosophy *"carry the torch."*[89]

10. *Jewish Gnosis 1928*[90]

The young scholarly rabbi Alexander Altmann spoke of "falling under [the] spell" of Jonas's *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist* at the time. Altmann, similarly affected by Heidegger, pursued his first phase of scholarship strongly marked by Jonas's work. Altmann, in fact, conceived and wrote but did not complete a book on Gnostic myth in Jewish sources. "The phenomenon of the Jewish response to the Gnostic religion captivated me with particular intensity during the early years of my scholarly interests, when—in the thirties—I came under the spell of Hans Jonas's

[85] Hans Jonas, "Wissenschaft as Personal Experience," *Hastings Center Report* 32 no. 4 (2002): 27–35, here 29.

[86] André Breton, "Manifesto of Surrealism," in Hans Robert Jauss, *Aesthetic Experience and Literary Hermeneutics*, trans. Michael Shaw; introduction by Wlad Godzich (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 56.

[87] Ibid., 60–61.

[88] Peter Bürger, in Richard Wolin, "Carl Schmitt: The Conservative Revolutionary Habitus and the Aesthetics of Horror," *Political Theory* 29, no. 6 (2001): 424–47, here 434.

[89] In this connection Jonas followed Heidegger, who asserted in *Being and Time* that philosophy "must run ahead of the positive sciences, and it *can*." Cited in Iain Thomson, "Heidegger and National Socialism," in *A Companion to Heidegger*, ed. Hubert Dreyfus and Mark Wrathall (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 32–48, here 35.

[90] Much has been written on this subject, and Moshe Idel and Joseph Dan have reviewed the question. For some further insight see Michael Brenner, "Gnosis and History: Polemics of German-Jewish Identity from Graetz to Scholem," in *New German Critique* 77 (1999): 45–60.

then brand-new, yet largely ignored book *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist* (1934), and wrote, in German, a volume on the rabbinic gnosis which, however, I never published except for some chapters that appeared as articles."[91]

Altmann was hardly alone as a young Jew inclined to Gnostic studies. Schaeder's students included Hans Lewy, Paul Kraus, Martin Plessner, Shlomo Pines, Hans Jakob Polotsky, and Franz Rosenthal. They followed Schaeder's lead and concentrated their collective genius on a "heightened appropriation" of "the religious syncretism of the Hellenized Orient."[92]

In its heyday this constellation of genius lit up what one of them called "the far unstudied land." Lewy's *Chaldaean Oracles*, Jonas's *Gnosis*, Scholem's *Major Trends*, Kraus's *Jabir ibn Hayyan*, and Polotsky's Manichaean studies each were groundbreaking interwar researches into phases of Gnosticism.[93] While Polotsky is remembered today chiefly as a greatly gifted linguist, between 1932 and 1935 he made some of the most important advances of his generation in the study of Manichaeanism.[94] Lewy authored the 1928 article on "Gnosis" for the *Encyclopedia Judaica*.[95] Jonas's *Gnosis* of 1934 was indebted to Polotsky's 1933 *Mani-Fund*.[96] Behind these stood Scholem's 1923 study of Gnosticism in *Sefer ha-Bahir*, and soon to follow them, his 1938 *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*.[97]

[91] From the preface to Alexander Altmann, *Essays in Jewish Intellectual History* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, for Brandeis University Press, 1981), ix.

[92] Hans Lewy, ed., *Philo: Philosophical Writings* (Oxford: East and West Library, 1946), 112. Scholem knew Hans Polotsky's work as it appeared. Thus Polotsky inscribed his copy of his review essay [*Le Muséon* 46 (1933): 247–71] to Scholem, "G. Scholem 5.12.1934 HJP."

[93] My teacher in Toronto, the late Willard Oxtoby, once wincingly referred to such scholarship as "cutting off their gnosis to spite their phases."

[94] Polotsky, like Pines and Kraus, was a student of Hans Heinrich Schaeder. The dedication of Polotsky's *Abriss des manichäischen Systems* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1934) read, "Hans Heinrich Schaeder zueignet." As was analogously the case with Jonas in his Gnostic studies, Polotsky largely abandoned these Manichaean studies after making landmark advances in the field while still a very young scholar.

[95] *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Berlin, 1928), 7: 453–59.

[96] Jonas mentioned this debt once again some forty years later in "A Retrospective View," *Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Gnosticism: Stockholm, August 20–25* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1977), 1–15, here 8.

[97] However, it is important to recall that Scholem's *Bahir*, originally published in 1923, may have already provided an earlier influence. For background on its publication, see Daniel Abrams' edition, *The Book Bahir: An Edition Based on the Earliest Manuscripts*, (Culver City, CA: Cherub Press, 1994).

An example of the significance of these connections for Jonas's *Gnosis* was his inclusion of Hermeticism.[98] Jonas included in his survey not Hermeticism as a whole, but only *Poimandres*. The specific mix of Manichaeanism, Mandaeism, and Hermeticism, together with neo-Platonism and patristic heresiologies, characterized the reconstructive recipe, as noted above, of the *Religionsgeschichtliche Schule* and especially of its leading exponents, Reitzenstein and Schaeder.

11. *Goldberg 1928*

Of all the characters relevant to Jonas's 1928 moment, perhaps the oddest was Oskar Goldberg. Goldberg (1885–1952), author of the 1925 *Die Wirklichkeit der Hebräer: Einleitung in das System des Pentateuch* claimed the quasi-magical power of biology conflated with the intoxicating power of sovereignty.[99]

On August 23, 1928, Gershom Scholem, ensconced in Jerusalem, penned a resonant letter to one Rosa Okun. He attacked the aggressive speculations of Oskar Goldberg as being a pseudo-philology, a Gnosticism masked as a "sort of biological Kabbalah" (*eine Art biologischer Kabbala*).[100] Here Scholem alluded to the fact that Goldberg termed the first epoch the "cosmo-biological phase." Goldberg held that the primal practice of religious ritual had been magically interactive with nature.[101] In the letter to Okun, Scholem called Goldberg "a small fat man who looked like a stuffed dummy and [who] exerted an uncanny magnetic power over a group of Jewish intellectuals who gathered around him." Goldberg claimed to have spent years in India, Tibet, and Kashmir. Incidentally, you can find a scary portrait of Goldberg

[98] Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, 147–73.

[99] Oskar Goldberg, *Die Wirklichkeit der Hebräer: Einleitung in das System des Pentateuch* (Berlin: Verlag David, 1925).

[100] Letter of Gershom Scholem to Rosa Okun, August 23, 1928, in *Gershom Scholem: Briefe 1914–1947*, ed. Itta Shedletzky (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1994), 238. See further Roland Goetschel, "Oskar Goldberg et la kabbale," préface à la réédition de la *Wirklichkeit der Hebraër*, édité par le Dr. Manfred Voigt, available on line at http://big.chez.com/jec2/archgoetchel.html.

[101] And thus a sort of mythicizing science. See Manfred Voigts, *Oskar Goldberg, der mythische Experimentalwissenschaftler: Ein verdrängtes Kapitel jüdischer Geschichte* (Berlin: Agora, 1992).

in Mann's *Doctor Faustus*, in the guise of Dr. Chaim Breisacher.[102] Mann published Goldberg in his journal *Mass und Wert.*

Rather remarkably, Goldberg's influence on Mann extended beyond a quasi-Gnostic origin myth.[103] Goldberg's gnosis bracketed Mann's myth in its enframing at *both* ends of human cultural experience, at *both* ends of time. The world viewed in an emplotted beginning-middle-end could now be told as story, images narratively appearing and disappearing on the stage of the world drama—that is to say, as myth—first in the cosmology of the opening sections of *Joseph and His Brothers*—at the very beginning of history, as it were—and second, in the figure of the *Apokalyptiker* Chaim Breisacher, strawman antagonist in *Doctor Faustus*—at history's end.

In "In Memory of W. B. Yeats," W. H. Auden mourned the real-world impotence even of high poetic genius. "Now Ireland has her madness and her weather still/ For poetry makes nothing happen."[104] In a perhaps intentional echo, Scholem asserted that the "ritual of Rabbinical Judaism makes nothing happen and *transforms* nothing" (emphasis in the original).[105] Goldberg, for his part, claimed that real religion, the ancient original, was a machinery of divine power employed by men to *make something happen*. The hunger for something to happen, or, more particularly, the drive to *make* something happen, underwrote the turn to gnosis.

12. *Alien God 1928*

"A strange spirit had taken hold of me; I no longer fit into our [parent's and family's] community, once so intimate; yet often a wild longing came over me to return to it as if to a lost paradise."[106] So Hesse's Sinclair, the narrator of *Demian*. Jonas likewise belonged ambivalently to his ambivalent generation, as if he had a choice in the matter. Alienated from their parents as were their German peers, in an unprecedented

[102] Jacob Taubes, "From Cult to Culture," *Partisan Review* 21 (1954): 387–400.

[103] Christian Hülshörster, *Thomas Mann und Oskar Goldbergs "Wirklichkeit der Hebräer"* (Frankfurt am Main: V. Klostermann, 1999).

[104] "In Memory of W. B. Yeats," in *Selected Poetry of W. H. Auden* (New York: Vintage, 1971), 53.

[105] Gershom Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism* (New York: Schocken, 1965), 121.

[106] Hesse, *Demian*, 35.

intergenerational war conducted on an epochal scale, young Jewish thinkers were all the more so alienated from Germany—even as, presumably, most of them loved their parents and loved their *Kultur*.

Considering such insupportable strains it might be fairer to say that their joint turn to heresy emerged not out of some inexplicable perversity but rather from the inescapable tragedy of ambivalence. "The function of the metamorphosis," observes Kafka scholar Sokel, "is to express utter ambivalence, an empirically impossible task which only an empirically impossible event can perform."[107] The Jewish student of Heidegger in 1928 is condemned to ambivalence—by the nature of his situation of no longer "belonging" yet still having "knowledge" transcending "belonging." It is possible to perceive a projection of the "guilt" of "alienated" Gnostics. This complex recalls Umberto Eco's notion of guilt. "In essence, the basic question of philosophy (as of psychoanalysis) is the same as that of the detective novel: who is guilty? To know the answer (to think you know) you have to conjecture that the facts possess a logic—the logic that the guilty party has imposed on them."[108]

The Gnostics' god found them guilty, so to speak. The alien god's occultation of immanent power, in a crudely Durkheimian reading, could be construed as a collective representation of alienation. But "The Alien God," so it tautologically appears, is not Alien for nothing. *The Alien God is the aliens' god.* Adorno, who called Kafka Gnostic and identified with him as a beatified hero, made this point with exquisite concision. "Only what does not fit into this world is true."[109] Hans Jonas struggled philosophically to make sense of his condition, in the midst of a yet more quickening reversion to his primordial alienation, to the Jews' irremediable condition of guilt, to be *Außenseiter*. In his ontologizing version, Jonas returned to his primordial condition, to being doubly a "stranger," to be alienated both *aus Deutschland* and in Europe. He could not, however, straightforwardly identify with the old dark Gnostic "situatedness" if for no other reason than his residual

[107] Walter H. Sokel, *The Writer in Extremis: Expressionism in Twentieth-Century German Literature* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1964), 48.

[108] Michael Dibdin, ed., *The Vintage Book of Classic Crime* (New York: Vintage, 1997), 213, from Umberto Eco, *The Name of the Rose*.

[109] Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, as cited by J. M. Bernstein in "'The Dead Speaking Stones and Stars': Adorno's Aesthetic Theory," in *The Cambridge Companion to Critical Theory*, ed. Fred Rush (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 139–64, here 156.

allegiance to Judaism's constitutive antipathy to myth—especially to Gnostic myth.

A fateful ambivalence, ambivalence as fate—the oppressive sense of ontological guilt that one associates with Kafka (d. 1924)—has also been associated with gnosis. Best known in the formulation of Walter H. Sokel, and now followed by Stanley Corngold, Kafka's expressionism itself expresses a sort of Gnosticism.[110] Kafka, Sokel's prototypical expressionist, owned at least one book about gnosis, and would seem to have grasped its contents.[111]

Jonas, as it turns out, was similarly well acquainted with the pathos and the moment of Expressionism, autobiographically specifying his encounter with the work of Franz Werfel, Walter Hasenclever, Johannes R. Becher, Max Reinhardt, and Ernst Toller.[112] In the telling context of conflicts with his father, Jonas recalls his Expressionist phase.[113]

Eventually, as a Jew, Jonas explicitly rejected the Alien God. "The *Deus absconditus*, the hidden god (not to speak of the absurd God) is a profoundly un-Jewish conception . . . a completely hidden God is not an acceptable concept by Jewish norms."[114] That rejection, however, was not necessarily a rejection of the presumptive libertinism that made that Gnostic god so alien to Jewish ethics.

13. *Libertinist Ethic 1928*

In *Gnostic Religion*, Jonas characterized Gnosticism as "the purest and most radical expression of the metaphysical revolt."[115] He also called it *libertine*. Kolakowski gives these earmarks of libertine philosophy.

[110] Walter H. Sokel, "Between Gnosticism and Jehovah: The Dilemma in Kafka's Religious Attitude," *South Atlantic Review* 50 (1985): 3–20; reprinted in *The Myth of Power and the Self: Essays on Franz Kafka* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2002), 292–311. See further Stanley Corngold, *Lambent Traces: Franz Kafka* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

[111] "*Die Gnosis.* Von Prof. D. Dr. Walther Köhler—Zürich. 1.–5. Tsd. Tübingen: Verlag von J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1911," in the catalog of Kafka's library online at http://www.pitt.edu/~kafka/k_s_bibII.html.

[112] Jonas, *Erinnerungen*, 52 and 92.

[113] Ibid., 71.

[114] Hans Jonas, "The Concept of God after Auschwitz: A Jewish Voice," in idem, *Mortality and Morality: A Search for the Good after Auschwitz*, ed. Lawrence Vogel (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 131–43, here 140.

[115] Jonas, *Gnostic Religion*, 270.

> [Libertine philosophy's] main tendencies can be summed up as follows: an empiricist, anti-scholastic attitude in the interpretation of human knowledge; an anti-Aristotelian, skeptical approach to metaphysics; an anti-Cartesian, atomistic physics; the separation of ethics from faith; a morality of pleasure and moderation as opposed to a morality based on fear and rigid rules.[116]

Reading Gnosis as libertinist had its lasting impact on the study of Judaism, I submit, in its immediate implementation in the historiographic revolution undertaken by Gershom Scholem. Scholem, in his celebrated "Redemption through Sin," found this "libertinist ethic" in "the excellent book on Gnosticism by the philosopher Hans Jonas."[117] Strikingly, Scholem strictly maintained this libertinist reading of Jonas's *Gnosis* as late as 1974, after nearly forty years of conversation with Jonas on the subject.[118] In the latter he remained strictly committed to Jonas, with very little variation. Thus, in his last major Eranos lecture, Scholem cited Jonas.

> In the shape of Libertinism, the most perfect dissolution of traditional bindings of human behavior and the excess of a feeling of freedom that credits itself with lack of discipline as self-proof, as merit and deed even, shows itself. The whole idea [of Libertinism] circles around the conception of Pneuma as the nobility's privilege of a new kind of humans, that is subject neither to the obligations nor the criteria of the previous world of creation. . . . The uninhibited usage of this freedom is not just the concern of a negative permission but positive realization of freedom itself. . . . The anarchy of the break, the Nihilism of 'Between the Times' fill up the intercession of lawlessness in between the laws with the self-righteous arbitrariness of the liberated Ego. They indulge in excessiveness and in sanctifying the outrage. . . . The renunciation of all duties contains with the insult of the institutions [world-divine powers] also a kind of declaration of war and active rebellion itself. In it [the renunciation] the revolution discloses itself without any speculative covering. In this respect Libertinism belongs in the center of the Gnostic about-face.[119]

[116] Leszek Kolakowski, *The Two Eyes of Spinoza & Other Essays on Philosophers* (South Bend, IN: Augustine Press, 2004), 294.

[117] Gershom Scholem, "Redemption through Sin," in idem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality* (New York: Schocken Books, 1995), 78–141, here 133.

[118] Gershom Scholem, "Der Nihilismus als religiöses Phänomen," *Eranos Jahrbuch* 43 (1974), "Normen im Wandel der Zeit/Norms in a Changing World". This lecture, never translated into English, comprises a survey of Scholem's conception of "libertine" sectarianism, and not of nihilism per se.

[119] Scholem, "Der Nihilismus als religiöses Phänomen," 234.

Scholem, Jonas, and Adorno, proffering perverse advice to their beleaguered co-religionists *entre deux guerres*, espoused a heretic as paragon. Their apparently libertinist vision was, it would seem, shared with Sigmund Freud, who championed a pre-Sinaitic Moses, a leader prior to divine legislation. The father of psychoanalysis was entering the last decade of his long life. In this decade he was increasingly preoccupied with religion, a turn marked by the publication of *The Future of an Illusion* (1927) followed by "Ein religiöses Erlebnis" in 1928.[120] This is no small point, given that this final shift in Freud's center of concerns was dialectically correlated to Jung's concurrent movement into a more or less explicitly Gnostic "analytical psychology." In terms of (the then-much-discussed theory of) *Weltanschauungen*, "worldviews," it is important to remember that this movement provoked the abyss that now gaped between a Jewish enlightenment worldview and a pagan counter-enlightenment worldview.[121] In his polemic against Freud, Jung, in the fateful year 1928, wrote "it is quite an unpardonable mistake to accept the conclusions of a Jewish psychology as generally valid."[122]

That the fate of Judaism was thus inextricably tied to the fate of Europe more generally was becoming increasingly clear. In Hamburg in 1928, an outlying member of Jonas's social circles, Leo Strauss, published his review of Freud's *Future of an Illusion* in that month's issue of *Der jüdische Student*—a journal to which Jonas also contributed—in which he alluded to an essay he wrote four years before, "On the Argument with European Science."[123] In that earlier piece he asserted that there is "*a European endeavor that as such has an immediate relation to the Jewish context, and this endeavor is the entire complex of the modern science of religion.*"[124] Then, in August 1928, he drew some conclusions. "The atheist has the perfect [right], is even duty bound, to interpret the 'speech of God'

[120] Sigmund Freud, "A Religious Experience," in *The Future of an Illusion, Civilization and Its Discontents, and Other Works*, vol. 21 of *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (London: Hogarth Press, 1957–1974), 167–72.

[121] See for example Karl Jaspers, *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* (Berlin, 1919).

[122] Carl G. Jung, *The Relations Between the Ego and the Unconscious*, vol. 7 of *Collected Works*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (1928; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), 148, n. 8.

[123] Leo Strauss, "Zur Auseinandersetzung mit der europäischen Wissenschaft," *Der Jude* 8 (1924): 613–17; repr. in Heinrich Meier, ed., *Leo Strauss: Gesammelte Schriften Band 2: Philosophie und Gesetz/Frühe Schriften* (Stuttgart: J. B. Metzler, 1997), 341–49.

[124] Cited in Michael Zank, *Leo Strauss: The Early Writings (1921–1932)* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2002), 108.

as the creation of the heart of the 'ones who hearken,' perhaps as the product of the spirit of the Jewish people."[125]

Freud and Jonas, Strauss, and Scholem, each were composing learned works as defense mechanisms for Jews, though they were not always construed as such. It has been remarked that heresy became the operative device for a perverse self-defense of Jewish *Bildung*.[126] Mehlmann makes a more generalized case for Walter Benjamin's "neo-Sabbatianism."[127]

Jonas did feel that his work was Zionist, that is, an assertion of Jewish autonomy and self-defense, in some sense, certainly by contrast to his fellow student Hannah Arendt's. "Mein Dissertationsthema 'Gnosis' war potentiell tausendmal politischer als Hannah Arendts Arbeit 'Die Liebesbegriff bei Augustin.'"[128] *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, deeply under the sway of Heidegger and Spengler, can certainly be read as a conservative work. Composed by an openly Zionist Jewish intellectual for a career in the German university, it was, however, under such circumstances, dialectically treading a razor's edge.

While almost dangerously dialectical, Jonas wrote in the open. Scholem and Strauss wielded counter-exemplars covertly to degrade the ideal of Kantian *Bildung*, which they replaced with an implicitly Nietzschean will-to-power. For Strauss and Scholem the discursive imperative was driven by its meaning to hide its meaning, as they might put it abstractly. That is, they both wrote in an esoteric style. Jonas never came close to writing esoterically, and in fact seemed constitutively unimpressed with smoke, mirrors, cloaks, daggers, or any other signs of it. However, he was not immune to the lure of Nietzsche, if only through the intermediation of Heidegger.

[125] Ibid., 203.

[126] Lazier, "Redemption through Sin", especially chapter 2, "Overcoming Gnosticism"; David Biale, "Historical Heresies and Modern Jewish Identity," *Jewish Social Studies* n.s. 8 (2002): 112–32; David Biale, "Shabbetai Zevi and the Seductions of Jewish Orientalism," in *The Dream and Its Destruction: The Sabbatean Movement and Its Branches—Messianism, Sabbateanism, Frankism*, ed. Rachel Elior, Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought 16–17 (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, Gershom Scholem Center for the Study of Jewish Mysticism and Kabbalah, 2001), 85–110.

[127] Jeffrey Mehlmann, *Walter Benjamin for Children: An Essay on his Radio Years* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993). See the criticism of Michael Weingrad, "Parisian Messianism: Catholicism, Decadence, and the Transgressions of Georges Bataille," *History & Memory* 13 (2001): 113–33.

[128] Jonas, *Erinnerungen*, 124.

Against the grain of esotericism and Libertinism, scholarship itself offered a straighter path forward.

14. *Philological Expressionism 1928*

Gnosis und spätantiker Geist was a potent blend stirred at a stirring moment—not a full-strength example but a still plenty potent example of *philological expressionism*.[129] Expressionism may have been the characteristic articulation of the philosophical shaking of the foundations centered around 1928; Kafka, Rosenzweig, Heidegger, Bloch, Adorno, and Benjamin each were masters of its volcanic style. Bloch and Heidegger, otherwise opposites, shared the passion for what I am calling philological expressionism.

In a departure from his typically nonpolemic tone, Jonas flayed Ernst Bloch at length.[130] The expressionists' utopia, he concluded, was fool's gold. This retrospect, however, tends to underplay the fact that Jonas read the expressionists, read Bloch, and knew the Gnostic spin integral to their self-understanding. Posterity seems to agree with Bloch's retrospective self-assessment of the expressionistic *The Spirit of Utopia*, a book that Jonas read before 1928.[131] Bloch reminisced that what "was specific to *The Spirit of Utopia* became especially definite, something entrusted peculiarly to evil, as to its remedy: *revolutionary gnosis*."[132] Jonas described in his memoirs enthusiastically reading Bloch and other expressionists.[133]

Like the Jewish philosophers Buber and Lévinas, Jonas turns to the "other," to responsibility for the "other." To get there he needed what amounted to a return from expressionism to sobriety, to philology—not

[129] I use this term as analogue to "philosophical expressionism," as elucidated by Peter Eli Gordon in *Rosenzweig and Heidegger: Between Judaism and German Philosophy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). I also have in mind the "political expressionism" associated with Carl Schmitt. See Ellen Kennedy, "Politischer Expressionismus," in *Complexio Oppositorum: Über Carl Schmitt*, ed. Helmut Quaritsch (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1987), 233–65; and Ellen Kennedy, "Carl Schmitt und Hugo Ball: Ein Beitrag zum Thema Politischer Expressionismus," *Zeitschrift für Politik* 35 (1988): 143–62.

[130] Hans Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 194–204.

[131] Jonas, *Erinnerungen*, 97.

[132] Ernst Bloch, "Afterword (1963)," *The Spirit of Utopia*, trans. Anthony Nassar (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 279 (emphasis added).

[133] Jonas, *Erinnerungen*, 97.

to pure philology, but rather philology put into the service of philosophy. Jonas's fellow student submitted his *Sobria ebrietas* in 1926 (published in 1929), dealing not only with Gnostic issues but with an ancient strategy, an embrace of "inebriated sobriety."[134] Walter Benjamin enjoyed his hashish experiments in September 1928, the same year that he published *Trauerspiel* and *One-way Street*.[135]

To put it telegraphically, philology could overcome Heidegger—if not philosophically then at least in practice. Consider two exemples from related historical fields: Paul Friedländer, in the history of philosophy; and Meyer Schapiro, in the history of art. Paul Friedländer, an exact contemporary of Heidegger, and Gadamer's other teacher, in addition to Heidegger, published his *Platon I* in 1928. Friedländer added a Heidegger chapter to the second edition of 1954, much as Jonas returned to his interrupted *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, both of them publishing a complete, Englished and de-Heideggerized reworking in the fifties. Or consider Meyer Schapiro (1904–1996) on Van Gogh's shoes. Philological caretaking again wins out over Heidegger's impressionistic exploitation of Van Gogh.[136]

Jonas's *Gnosis* teetered on "the rim of the volcano" (in the phrase of George Lichtheim). He abandoned Marburgian neo-Kantianism, but otherwise was only weakly a practitioner of expressionist style. Demythologization in the hand of Jonas, in fact, strangely personified the cult of reason and its return. This too was an expressionist trait, as Sokel would have it. "The Expressionist activist intensifies the Socratic faith in persuasion and reasoning until it attains a white-hot luster of ecstasy; but this ecstasy is based on reason, this flame is the white light of reason."[137]

Like the *Neue Sachlichkeit*, in some respects, the turn to philology touted a kind of sobering up. Jonas's personal circle of intellectual exiles soon

[134] I have made a study of this "intensification" undergone by members of his immediate circle, the so-called "PILEGESH" circle: "Concubines and Puppies: Philologies of Esotericism in Jerusalem between the Wars," forthcoming in the Festschrift for Joel Kraemer, edited by Tzvi Langermann.

[135] Walter Benjamin, *On Hashish* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

[136] Meyer Schapiro, "The Still-Life as a Personal Object—A Note on Heidegger and van Gogh," in *The Reach of Mind: Essays in Memory of Kurt Goldstein, 1878–1965*, ed. Marianne L. Simmel (New York: Springer Pub. Co., 1968), 203–9; and idem, "Further Notes on Heidegger and van Gogh," in idem, *Theory and Philosophy of Art: Style, Artist, and Society: Selected Papers* (New York: George Braziller, 1994), 135–51.

[137] Sokel, *The Writer in Extremis*, 183.

exchanged the hot style of expressionism for the cool style of philology. Philological expressionism, the transition between expressionism and philology, bore uneasily the full weight of European learning, something more than the sum of *Bildung* plus *Kultur* plus *Orientalistik* plus *Hellenismus*—a Nietzscheanized supercharging of the function of knowledge in the fate of Europe.

15. *Final Reflections: Between Kultur and Expressionism, 1928*

A felt *crisis of time* itself bore down on the young doctoral student in the summer of 1928. His *Doktorvater* Martin Heidegger was burning in the fiery midst of *Sein und Zeit*.[138] Jonas's project was not "out of synch" with Heidegger's. Both master and student were starting from the phenomenological ground up, to launch onto the roiling waters of *Augenblick*, starting from a radical dismissal of history. He explicitly rejected historicist explanations, of causation, of influence and borrowing, as being insufficient. These historical explanations had first to be bracketed before the existential act grasps directly the meaning itself in its totality.

Beginning thus with forgetting, with a rejection of historicism, with an apocalyptic retrojection of absolute affect onto the mythic past, Gnostic myth *remusicalized* history. I take the characterization from Sokel's interpretation of German expressionism: "Music replaced sculpture as the primary art of the West....[The] adoption of these principles of musical composition by the other arts is probably the single most dominant characteristic of modernism."[139] There was an experience to be had here. History musicalized is history experienced immediately, emotionally, dramatically.

The choice of myth was the important thing, because it was seen to transcend history, to mark "moment and not duration." Heidegger, as I

[138] I am influenced in the present effort by the "experiment in historical simultaneity" of Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *In 1926: Living at the Edge of Time* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997). Among (many) other things, Gumbrecht argues that *Sein und Zeit* "can be read as originating in a reaction to the emotional, intellectual, and political environments of 1926.... Heidegger followed the orientation of a specific set of prevailing cultural codes. This constellation of codes has everything to do with the intellectual phenomenon that Hugo von Hofmannsthal, in 1927, termed the *konservative Revolution*" (ibid., 443). I suggest that the same applies to Jonas's *Gnosis*.

[139] Sokel, *The Writer in Extremis*, 26.

have tried to show, was not alone in his effort to transcend metaphysics by means of a radical historicity. These German mentors found such a way in an existential immediacy described by Jonas: "It flashes up, as it were, in the light of decision, when the projected 'future' reacts upon the given 'past' (*Geworfenheit*) and in this meeting constitutes what Heidegger calls the 'moment' (*Augenblick*): *moment, not duration*, is the temporal mode of this 'present'"[140] And this "moment," in Jonas's words, "as far as I can see, is originally Gnostic."[141] As Sokel put it, the "musicalization of the symbol and the accompanying destruction of the traditional concept of character are the strongest common links between all modernisms, but especially between Surrealism and Expressionism."[142] Jonas made much the same point about his own project, that "historical scholarship, for all its distancing, can also be a means of heightened appropriation."[143] Philological expressionism, in other words, allowed not an appropriation of Gnostics in the past so much as it did gnosis in the present.

Mark Lilla may approach some sad accuracy with his guess that the end of historical memory shall be more traumatic than was the death of the gods.[144] *Time panics the Gnostic*—"*Das Panische des Zeit-Erlebnisses*," as Jonas put it.[145] "Abandoned in the midst of a hostile world that man cannot recognize as his own; fallen into an abominable misery; torn by grief and pain—such is the Gnostic's temporal state."[146] *Die mythologische Gnosis* was no act of panic but rather a meticulously self-controlled reflection on such panic. Perhaps the greatest insight of Jonas in the end was self-reflective. He saw that this terror of being in time was simultaneously theirs and his. His empowering insight was to insist on *his own meaning context*, Marburg 1928, his own existentialist immediacy, to be *potestas clavium* for a putatively dead religion. In 1928 past and present telescoped into Jonas's return of Gnostic myth. Implicitly a critique of current times, *Die mythologische Gnosis* explicitly identified

[140] Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, 336 (emphasis added).
[141] Ibid., 334.
[142] Sokel, *The Writer in Extremis*, 30.
[143] Jonas, "Wissenschaft as Personal Experience," 29.
[144] Mark Lilla, "Slouching toward Athens," *New York Review of Books* 52, no. 11 (June 23, 2005) (review of Christian Meier, *From Athens to Auschwitz* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005]).
[145] Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, 100. And see the discussion by Henri-Charles Puech in "Gnosis and Time," in *Man and Time: Papers from the Eranos Yearbooks*, ed. Joseph Campbell (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), 38–85, here 67.
[146] Puech, "Gnosis and Time," 68.

the ancients as avatars—paradoxically if no less effectively—of Weimar modernity, that contemporary moment itself so distinctively torn between atavizing and progressive forces. *Die mythologische Gnosis* found in the old stories an immediate—if, alas, no less sustaining—exit from the bind of time.

CHAPTER THREE

RESSENTIMENT—A FEW MOTIFS IN HANS JONAS'S EARLY BOOK ON GNOSTICISM[1]

Micha Brumlik

I

Hans Jonas embarked on his book about Gnosticism[2] in 1925, submitted it in 1928 as a dissertation in Marburg, published it in 1934 in Göttingen, and republished it years later in clearly revised versions.[3] At its core lay, essentially, the extremely thorough extended paper by a surprisingly well-read twenty-two-year-old Jewish student. The reference to the author's origins is significant in this case, as the corresponding academic work took place within the framework of a department devoted to the New Testament, even though in Marburg at that time it was not possible for non-Protestants to study Protestant theology and to conclude their studies formally. So it was that a few years later, Jonas submitted his work, which had been completed in the context of Protestant theology—in Rudolf Bultmann's department—to the latter's intellectual companion and partner, Martin Heidegger, as a philosophical dissertation.[4]

The twenty-five-year-old Jonas had not carried out any source research, but had tried his hand at a classification and interpretation of the diverse and scattered source material that had been investigated by others. Nevertheless, since then, his astonishing achievement has left a deep impression on the general history of ideas and certainly also on

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[1] Translated from the German by Margret Vince.

[2] Hans Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist: Erster Teil: Die mythologische Gnosis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1934).

[3] See Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963).

[4] See Hans Jonas, *Erinnerungen*, based on conversations with Rachel Salamander, ed. Christian Wiese (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2003), 116f.

the specialist research. A glance at the index of a relevant anthology[5] quickly shows that Jonas is cited more frequently than any other scholar. At the same time, however, it becomes clear that Jonas's view of the sources he used was one-sided, and he failed to take account of at least one important alternative hypothesis to his fundamental interpretation of this complex spiritual movement as an expression of pessimistic flight from the world. In this alternative view, it was claimed that the trigger mechanism for the phenomenon of historical Gnosticism was joy and boundless rejoicing over the knowledge of the redemption achieved by God—as, for example, Barbara Aland writes, in relation to the *Evangelium Veritatis* (*Gospel of Truth*) found at Nag Hammadi:

> I have long asked myself [says Aland] whether as regards ancient Gnosticism, the order should not be the other way around, namely: first knowledge, and in fact knowledge not of an Un-God, who is defined only in that he is not World, but the knowledge of a God who is filled full, who gives love and goodness and who explains about the suffering world and the cause of its suffering.... Marcion's order was this one. Certainly one can only deem it possible [thus Aland concluded from this finding at a congress in St. Petersburg in 2000] if one is able to posit a God outside this world, whose essence is not exhausted in negativity—or to put it another way, if one can believe.[6]

In fact the young Hans Jonas embarked on his studies in the context of a personal and political atmosphere in which "belief"—whether Jewish or Christian—was in deep crisis, so that one is surely doing no injustice to him and his academic teachers, Martin Heidegger and Rudolf Bultmann, if one remarks that "belief" was anything but obvious: on the contrary, what seemed to be important was to investigate, with philosophical thoroughness and philological meticulousness, on what foundations "belief" could be based in general.[7] If these positions are furthermore combined with political and above all personal crises, then that which was intended to be the object of religious-historical research ironically turns out to be precisely that bundle of motives that moved the authors of texts for their part.

[5] See Kurt Rudolph, ed., *Gnosis und Gnostizismus* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1975), 859.

[6] Quoted in Micha Brumlik, *Die Gnostiker: Der Traum von der Selbsterlösung des Menschen* (Berlin: Eichborn, 2000), 5.

[7] See Hans-Georg Gadamer, "Die Marburger Theologie," in idem, *Heideggers Wege* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1983), 29–40.

Scholarship appears to be largely in agreement on the fact that Hans Jonas presented an interpretation of Gnosticism that is essentially based on psychology of religion, and gave it the air of an existential analysis. No one saw this more clearly than the Jewish academic Hans Joachim Schoeps, who was likewise interested in New Testament topics. As early as 1956, Schoeps had written about Jonas's book that its author wanted to "describe an archetypal experience that reveals itself" in all manifestations of Gnosticism. However: "But just what this actually consisted of, I have been unable to grasp."[8] The thoughts that follow claim to place this archetypal experience in a single event in Hans Jonas's life history, and thus consciously reduce Jonas's interpretation to the context in which it arose, in the Marburg of the early 1920s. I am aware that such a reductionism cannot fully solve the problem of the relationship between genesis and validity, between "context of discovery" and "context of justification." I shall return to this question in the conclusion.

II

When Hans Jonas visited his old teacher Rudolf Bultmann after the Second World War, Bultmann was full of hope that the book that Jonas had tucked under his arm was the long-promised second part of his work *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*. Published in Göttingen in 1934, and based on a dissertation submitted in 1928 under Heidegger, it was a work which Jonas himself later described as a journeyman's piece, lacking in independence.[9] Years later, he viewed the work as an "interesting, unique attempt which had not been undertaken up to that point," as an "application of existential analysis, with its methods of interpretation and its understanding of *Dasein*, to a particular body of historical material: in this case the Gnosticism of late antiquity."[10] Jonas's attempt—which was regarded with only limited enthusiasm by his Ph.D. supervisor, Heidegger—involved using the latter's philosophical method of "existential analysis" scientifically. However, he did not take into consideration the fact that in the late 1920s, Heidegger had

[8] Hans-Joachim Schoeps, "Zur Standortbestimmung der Gnosis," in Rudolph, ed., *Gnosis und Gnostizismus*, 468.

[9] Jonas, *Erinnerungen*, 236.

[10] Ibid., 117.

already systematically developed the conviction, later to become a slogan: "science does not think."

For Rudolf Bultmann, with whom Jonas actually did work, but under whom he, as a Jew, could not take a doctorate in Protestant theology, it was at any rate a matter of describing the transcendental analysis of *Dasein* as a "neutral anthropological basic state, from which the call of belief could be interpreted 'existentially,' independently of its content within the basic movement of existence."[11] Accordingly, both Bultmann—in his 1934 preface to Jonas's work—and Jonas himself assumed, almost as if it were obvious, that a scientific application of existential analysis was meaningful and possible, without taking into account the fact that Heidegger's reservations in relation to science in no way applied only to the natural sciences, but also at least as much to the humanities.

The original German version of *Being and Time* first appeared as *Sein und Zeit* in 1927, as volume seven of the *Jahrbuch für Phänomenologie und phänomenologische Forschung*, edited by Edmund Husserl. It contained a decisive position on the relationship between this philosophy—the *Daseinsanalytik* or "analytic of *Dasein*"—and anthropology, psychology, and biology. In drawing a strict separation between analysis of *Dasein* and these sciences, he simultaneously attested that they missed the philosophical problem underlying them and were—since they did not take account of this—not even capable of reaching their own goal. In this connection, however, Heidegger also proposed to strengthen the scientific status of the aforementioned disciplines through new impulses—ways "which must have their source in ontological problematics."[12] That, however, presupposed a new version of the concept of the person, which—by contrast to positivism, but also by contrast to neo-Kantianism—could no longer be understood as an object that could be objectivized, but neither could it be understood any longer as a given *a priori* principle of knowledge:

> Essentially the person exists only in the performance of intentional acts, and is therefore essentially *not* an object. Any psychical Objectification of acts, and hence any way of taking them as something psychical, is tantamount to depersonalization. A person is in any case given as a performer of intentional acts which are bound together by the unity of a meaning.[13]

[11] Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, part 1, 36.

[12] Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, 11th unrevised edition (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1967), 45. Translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson as *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 71.

This definition also has considerable consequences in particular for theology—or to put it more precisely: for the turning away from the traditional theological definition of the essence of humans. For the classical Christian definition, which incorporates the ancient tradition, of the essence of a human as a finite being, an *ens finitum*, which nonetheless or precisely because of this strives for "transcendence," would cause the question about his Being (*Sein*) to be forgotten. To put these insights into action encumbers the corresponding disciplines with the imperative "that these ontological foundations can never be disclosed by subsequent hypotheses derived from empirical material, but that they are always 'there' already, even when that empirical material simply gets *collected*."[14]

The intensive cooperation between Heidegger and Bultmann in Marburg in the 1920s, which took the form of joint seminars as well as invitations to the philosopher to give lectures before the circle of theologians there, suggests that one should examine Heidegger's own thoughts at this time on Christian theology.

Both before he was called to Marburg, and after he was called back to Freiburg, Heidegger had concerned himself with questions of theology and philosophy of religion. The *Vorlesungen zur Phänomenologie des religiösen Lebens* (Lectures on the phenomenology of religious life),[15] given in 1920–1921, deal thoroughly with the phenomenology of religion and the history of religion. They pose the radical question of whether the material of the history of religion could be used at all for phenomenology, and reach the conclusion that its concepts and results should be subjected to destruction, in order to then provide a precise schema of "phenomenological explanation."[16] This is concerned with effecting a move away from the object-historical to the performance-historical. In other words, it is concerned with giving voice to the actual life experience in its situation, in the reading of theological texts: we "see the situation as if we were writing the letter with Paul. We perform

[13] Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 73.

[14] Ibid., 75.

[15] In Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 60, part II, *Vorlesungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1995).

[16] Ibid., 82.

the writing and dictating of letters together with him."[17] Heidegger's further interpretations then lead to the conclusion that there can be no certainty for the Christian life: "Uncertainty is also characteristic for the basic important things of actual life. The uncertain is not coincidental, but necessary."[18]

In 1929 and 1936 Heidegger dealt repeatedly with the "fundamental concepts of metaphysics," and also—under the title "Beiträge zur Philosophie" (Contributions to Philosophy)—with God, in particular the "last God." Following its subtle investigations into the nature of boredom, the 1929 lecture arrives at the wish for a person who shall correct the misjudgment of the situation that was created by the world war. Heidegger appears to be convinced that a single-handed existential change of mind is no longer possible: "We must first call again for that which can put fear into our *Dasein*. For how do things stand with our *Dasein* if an event such as the world war has passed by us essentially without trace?"[19] Finally in 1936 (we shall return to this) Heidegger was to develop his own—no longer existential-analytical, but existential-ontological—doctrine of the last God, a now truly quite different God, harbinger of a new period of human history and its possibilities.[20]

Beyond these fundamental questions, Bultmann and Jonas were convinced that the existential analysis shaped by Heidegger represented a particularly fruitful method "of grasping the actual meaning of a historical phenomenon through the principle of existential analysis."[21] Without mentioning—in the printed version—the names of Bultmann or Heidegger, in the "Introduction" Jonas attempts to give a precise form to "existential analysis" as a scientific method. It is noticeable here that contrary to the criticism of *a priorism* raised by Heidegger in *Being and Time*, he grasps existential analysis in transcendental-philosophical terms, as it were. The "Gnostic *Dasein* position" should be understood—contrary to all reductionism and like any other *Dasein* position—as a response to the question "of the last, root-like unity of the principle" of a multiplicity of religious phenomena. The answer itself must then certainly not—and Jonas places particular importance

[17] Ibid., 87.
[18] Ibid., 105.
[19] Martin Heidegger, "Die Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik," in idem, *Gesamtausgabe*, vols. 29/30 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1983), 255.
[20] Martin Heidegger, "Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)," in idem, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 65 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1989), 405f.
[21] Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, part 1, x.

on this—lie in the statement of a "principle," but must lead to the "existential root itself."[22] Thus in the course of existential analysis developed by Jonas, it is a matter of avoiding causal reductionisms that remain extraneous to the matter just as much as an *a priorism* of philosophy of consciousness.

Jonas strives for a theory which—without relinquishing the naming of a preceding outline of *Dasein*—acknowledges its historicity, as it were. *Dasein*, the term used by Jonas—together with Heidegger—for people who complete their life historically, behaves constitutively toward a world "whose constitution it maintains from itself in specific interpretations, so that in this, its innermost relationship to itself is realized also, and so that it undertakes to deal with its condition, its real rootedness in the world, in terms of its essence, in attempts at interpreting the world, with which it gleans the horizons of its possible existentiality from its absolute facticity."[23]

In order to give this form of an existential analysis a material certainty and not to have to stop at the ultimately empty statement that a *Dasein* is unfathomably constituted just as it is constituted, it appears to be indispensable to refer to existential "archetypal phenomena" (*Urphänomene*), to "invariants," with whose order a historical outline of *Dasein* must respectively be concerned. Jonas names the following as relevant "archetypal phenomena": dependence on the world and freedom, life and death, care, fear, protection and concealment"[24]—all "existentialia" whose origins in *Being and Time* are not difficult to discern.

Accordingly, in terms of religious phenomenology, at least two tasks are to be completed. First of all, one must show how a given basic religious position deals with such "archetypal phenomena"; and secondly, one must ask how such overall interpretations could have arisen in general. Jonas sees the greater challenge in the second question, since the older research, on whose material results he bases himself and which he summarizes, came first in terms of historical genesis. The historical-genetic research that was available to Jonas found common features in the different Gnostic systems, but explained their respective development according to the occurrence of a religious syncretism through a series of contingent accretions, pervasions and differentiations. Jonas

[22] Ibid., 12.
[23] Ibid., 14.
[24] Ibid., 15.

however—with his variant of Heidegger's existential analysis adopted from Bultmann—strives for a method that determines the unity of a historical object neither purely by way of definition (as for example in Max Weber's method of the formation of ideal types) nor indeed substantially historico-philosophically (as in the case of the Hegelian Ferdinand Christian Bauer),[25] but conceives of inner unity and historical contingency in one. The systematic plausibility of Jonas's variant of existential analysis consequently depends on whether it can succeed in constructing mental outlines both from an inner unity as well as on whether it is possible to have to understand them, as it were, not as necessary consequences of a historical process.

However, certainly since the philosophy of German idealism, the combination of actual contingency and inner unity was a specific expression of human self-awareness and "I"-awareness, through which the suggestion arises that Jonas ultimately tried his hand at transferring a model from the philosophy of consciousness to the area of history of mind. This accusation appears unjust insofar as the claim of existential analysis since Heidegger consisted precisely in abolishing the consciousness-philosophical distance of a cognizant consciousness vis-à-vis a world presented to him as objective, and replacing this conceptual figure with the construct of a *Dasein* that is already involved in the world passionately and in terms of mood. But even then the question remains open as to what relationship this *Dasein* that has been thrown into existence stands vis-à-vis the world into which it was thrown. Does it determine this world or is it determined by it? Can it achieve the freedom for self-determination or does it refuse its self-determination in that as "man," it refuses the knowledge of this, its constitution?

It is more than mere coincidence that these formal inquiries of the logic of the existential-analytical understanding of freedom found their most significant applications in the examination of the Gnostic systems—and later, in the case of Bultmann, of the Gospel according to John,[26] for both the Gnostic myths and the introductory songs of the Gospel according to John appeared to articulate this very problem in figurative language. But even then it remains unclear whether, and to what extent, the instruments of existential analysis correspond to

[25] Ferdinand C. Baur, "Die Gnosis," in Rudolph, ed., *Gnosis und Gnostizismus*, 1–16.

[26] Rudolf Bultmann, *Das Evangelium des Johannes* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1941).

the polyphonic texture of religious systems. Are they really expressions of an outline of *Dasein* that ultimately cannot be derived any further? In order to be able to answer this question, it is essential to let Jonas speak in more detail himself:

> If we [he explains in a longer comment on the causality of spiritual, cultural objects] spoke of the finished products as the object of object-historical research, then this would thus indicate a producer underlying it. We understand this here not as the respective empirical subjects (individual or collective, ethnological, etc.), which are themselves points of intersection of countless causal lines aside from themselves, but as the basic position of *Dasein* in that primordial layer [*Urschicht*] of the imaginative apperception of Being [*Sein*], from which, as a historical act, the overall constitution of the "world" and of the *Dasein* relationship to the world leads to an entire epoch: in such a way that this original constitution is the *a priori* binding horizon of the understanding of the world and of the self for the corresponding epoch and the empirical subjects in it, within which all corresponding explicit attempts at interpretation, differences in interpretation, and changes in interpretation—which for the rest, as empirical realities, are subject to worldly causalities—must take place. Thus we understand the producer as the transcendentally constitutive, which is respectively rooted in an actually historical fundamental state of "*Dasein*."[27]

The attempt to reconstruct this position first of all shows that Jonas is trying to make the genesis of cultural or religious texts clear in the metaphor of product and producer. Secondly, he unearths the idea that the "producer" is conceived according to the idealist theory of self-awareness: it is a matter of the "fundamental position of *Dasein* in that primordial layer of the imaginative apperception of Being." If *Dasein* denotes the respectively individual human existence, then the concept of apperception—as used in modern German philosophy from Leibniz to Kant—denotes a conscious form of self-perception. An "imaginative apperception" would accordingly be the constitution of a self that is steered by imaginative power, thus as it were—in contemporary terms—a person's self-invention, his most personal design of himself. Strikingly, Jonas relates the concept of "imaginative apperception" not to *Dasein*, but to a "primordial layer of Being," by which he now brings in the sharp and knowledge-guiding distinction between *Sein und Dasein* (Being and *Dasein*) that underlay Heidegger's *Being and Time* and makes Being itself into a kind of subject, a kind of *Dasein*.

[27] Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, part 1, 13.

This is an intellectual operation which gives out essential contents of Heideggerian *Dasein* analysis, even if it does not give them up. Certainly that on its own cannot constitute an objection. Nonetheless one must ask whether, with this conceptual image, Jonas is not simply reviving a category of Hegelian philosophy of history, for example of the spirit of a people (*Volksgeist*), merely in a different concept, without thereby being able to achieve significant gains in knowledge. As if Jonas had anticipated such objections, he summarizes his program once more:

> At any rate such an existential root is to be postulated *a priori* as the unified and unifying principle for each complex of evidence of contemporary history, insofar as there is active production in it; it is respectively a *Dasein* which has constructed this system from statements, testifies in this evidential world, objectivizes its Being in it—wherein a heterogeneity of evidential elements is also held together from there.[28]

Ultimately, it now becomes clear, it is a matter of the constitutive performances of individuals, of *Dasein* whose objectivizations are to be subjected to a "questioning from its *logos*."[29] The main connecting theme of this questioning is then the insight

> that *Dasein* behaves in a constitutive manner to a world whose constitution it maintains, from itself, in specific interpretations, so that its innermost relationship to itself is also realized in this; and that it undertakes to deal with its state of mind, its real attachment in the world, in outlines of interpretation of the world in terms of its nature, with which it wins from its absolute facticity the horizons of its possible existentiality—existential insights of this type change into corresponding lines of inquiry in relation to historical *Dasein* realities.[30]

These reflections are admittedly not aimed at an idealist program: *Dasein* behaves in a constitutive manner to "its" world, which certainly is not to be equated with the world common to all. Also, entirely in accordance with the program of *Being and Time*, this constitutive performance takes place in the course of a hermeneutic circle in situations in which human existence is always already involved. But every interpretation of the world in this sense modifies, changes, or renews the respective understanding of the self. Thus—and this will be the scientific program that Jonas will now follow—a direction of inquiry can

[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid., 14.
[30] Ibid.

be justified which sees and at the same time demonstrates intellectual patterns of interpretation as an *existentiell* explanation in a particular epoch, just as contingent *existentiell* states of mind find their expression in such patterns of interpretation.

By drawing a strict distinction between this analysis and empirical/actual historical causalities, Jonas can let their validity stand, and thus also the convincing nature of the theories and philological results he has discovered, and risk an overall interpretation. At most one must then ask critically why Jonas did not also attempt at least to name his own blind spot, if not to illuminate it: namely, the question of the existential meaning of his own scientific undertaking. By using existential analysis in a naively instrumental manner, as it were, and in spite of all hermeneutic insights undertaking his subject matter as an "object," as it were, he does not do justice to the claim of an existential analysis in the spirit of the Heidegger of *Being and Time*, and assimilates his method to the otherwise so reviled positivist spirit of the times.

III

However, it could be that the existential meaning of what he is doing is contained much more precisely in Jonas's text and in his intention than he himself—just twenty-five years old at the time—was aware. We must, however, draw attention to a problem of early Heideggerian philosophy, or of the Heideggerian school. Thus for example Herbert Marcuse, who originated from this school himself, had already pointed out in 1929 that the distinction between "existential" and "existentiell" allowed the program of a "concrete philosophy" to slip away into the noncommittal, and in 1959 Jürgen Habermas was able to show how much the supposed "existentialia" owed to the suppression of concrete historical situations.[31]

Jonas's early studies in Gnosticism also succumb to just this process of misjudgment. The concluding lines of his methodological introduction concern the difference and dependence of Gnostic myth and

[31] Herbert Marcuse, "Über konkrete Philosophie," in idem, *Der deutsche Künstlerroman: Frühe Aufsätze* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1978), 385–406; Jürgen Habermas, "Die große Wirkung," in idem, *Philosophisch-Politische Profile* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973), 76–84.

philosophically educated ways of being. Here too, Jonas does not tire of emphasizing that it cannot be an empirical dependence. But

> this dependence is not an external one; and the existential foundation of our entire area of interpretation on the Gnostic fundamental myth, its hermeneutic capacity of relation back to it, is in principle not to be understood as a fact of literary history and to be demonstrated in terms of literary history, but is a fact of *Dasein* history and to be demonstrated only in existential analysis.[32]

Consider the wording here: the phrase "the existential foundation of our entire area of interpretation" can certainly be understood naively as a reference to the scientifically chosen topic, but one can also relate it to the existence of the academic Hans Jonas himself, who here—even if not entirely consciously—admits to himself that with his undertaking, he himself is subject to the Gnostic fundamental myth. As we have already remarked, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist* appeared in 1934. Against this background, all the more striking is a footnote on the mood of the soul in the spirit of melancholy, in which the subject once again is the non-derivability of basic positions such as optimism and pessimism:

> We recall for example the history of suffering of the Jewish people, which left the connection to this world and even the fundamental optimism of its religion unperturbed. The world always remained a divine creation, and even in its utmost adversity the epitome of divine work.[33]

In these lines, at the same time—and it cannot be an inadmissible encroachment on the private sphere to state this—Jonas outlined his own attitude to life which, as his memoirs show, was characterized by a fundamental optimism.

In these same memoirs, at the same time, he recorded the reaction of his friend and contemporary, the conservative Jewish political philosopher Leo Strauss, to the book on Gnosticism:

> The anti-revolutionary Strauss was so conservative that on reading my book on Gnosticism, he instinctively sensed that a revolutionary element lay concealed in Gnosticism, and he wrote to me that from his personal acquaintance with me, he had never quite realized that I was actually a revolutionary in disguise.[34]

[32] Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, part 1, 89.
[33] Ibid., 65.
[34] Jonas, *Erinnerungen*, 262.

In fact, in this statement, Jonas is mistaken, at least insofar as no special instinct is required in order to gain the impression from reading the book on Gnosticism that he regarded Gnosticism as revolutionary. In fact—as is to be shown later—Jonas develops this thought in detail, and what is in question is at most the sense in which the concept of revolution was used. In a lengthy digression, entitled "Das revolutionäre Element der Gnosis" (The Revolutionary Element of Gnosticism), Jonas distinguishes his use of the term from the usual political use, which is aimed at actions that endeavor to reshape the world aggressively. However, if by "revolutionary" one understands a position

> which from the point of view of giving new meaning, revolutionizes a system of values that has been handed down, and against whose domination it rises up, and replaces it with a likewise totally different one; which establishes afresh and negates just as comprehensively, namely in the fundamentals then Gnosticism is eminently revolutionary, and in this sense we shall call it so.[35]

Thus when Jonas remarks in his memoirs that in Gnosticism he saw an ancient counterpart to Heidegger, then one may further conclude that he, like many other students, saw in Heidegger a revolutionary thinker[36]—a role with which Heidegger, as we know from the recollections of Gadamer, for example, certainly concerned himself. However, the content and aims of this revolutionary thought were those of conservative revolution, of the break with everything that had been handed down in the spirit of establishing new meaning.[37]

In his memoirs, Jonas also puts it on record that he noticed the Gnostic elements in Heidegger's philosophy only very much later, which is certainly plausible in psychological terms. Nevertheless, if he regarded ancient Gnosticism as a counterpart to Heidegger, then even then he must have found in both a *tertium comparationis* that would have had to allow him to reach the conclusion that Heidegger too philosophized from out of a Gnostic mood. The late insight into the nihilist character of Heidegger's existentialism would accordingly already have been perceptible back in 1925. How did Jonas define the revolutionary character of Gnosticism in 1928?

[35] Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, part 1, 214.
[36] Hans Jonas, *Wissenschaft als persönliches Erlebnis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987), 9–10.
[37] Rüdiger Safranski, *Ein Meister aus Deutschland: Heidegger und seine Zeit* (München: Carl Hanser, 1994), 113–14.

The wealth of material that he laid out in the dissertation becomes clearer if, with the author, one separates the Gnostic fundamental idea from its often compromising and mythological additions, and refers to that author who, according to the conviction of what was then the most advanced study in religious history, functioned as it were as a pure form, as an ideal type of Gnosticism, namely Marcion. Jonas concedes to him the articulation of the gospel of the unknown, alien, and new God in a clear and, as it were, most objective form,[38] and fully agrees with Adolf von Harnack's[39] view that Marcion was the only thinker in Christendom "who was completely serious about the conviction that the Godhead who redeems from the world... had absolutely nothing to do with cosmology."[40] Jonas, who makes no secret of his fundamental belief in the God of creation and the law of Judaism in this treatise, accordingly sees the revolutionary character of Gnosticism, or more specifically of Marcion, above all in the fact "that in this, everywhere where it found it, it set itself up in open opposition and, without regard for the high intellectuality of this model, unleashed its entire accumulated resentment on the Jewish world-God."[41]

This remark is all the more notable for the fact that the concept of resentment (*Ressentiment*)[42] adopted from Nietzsche's *Genealogie der Moral* (*The Genealogy of Morals*) not only does not agree with the decision, made in the methodical introduction, to ascribe the genesis of the Gnostic world framework at most subordinately to psychological or social causes, but positively contradicts it. If "Gnosticism" is a revolutionary position resulting from the spirit of resentment, and if this resentment is directed against the Jewish God of creation and of the law, then this God proves to be at the same time a principle—even if in the best sense—of what exists respectively.

In Jonas's view, Marcion's Gnosticism misjudges the Jewish God at most in his "intellectuality," but not in terms of his revolutionary and liberating traits, which can equally be asserted. Beyond all the vivid platitudes, Marcion's "myth-free theology" involved a frontal assault, in complete "revolutionary seriousness," on the God of the Old Testament,

[38] Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, part 1, 173.
[39] Adolf von Harnack, *Marcion: Das Evangelium vom fremden Gott* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrich'sche Buchhandlung, 1924).
[40] Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, part 1, 173.
[41] Ibid., 228.
[42] Friedrich Nietzsche, "Die Genealogie der Moral," in idem, *Kritische Studienausgabe*, vol. 5 (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag/de Gruyter, 1988), 245–412.

and thus on Judaism. According to Jonas, Marcion embodied the pinnacle of a revolutionary development that had overcome all superstitions as well as all metaphysical speculation, and which was now bringing to the fore, even if it was caused by resentment, the new principle. The attack now goes "straight against the mighty figure of the Old Testament God as the only worthy symbol of the contrast: principle of the world, of temporality, and of positive morality." It is a rebellion which represents "in a corresponding exacerbation, the boldest and most inflammatory tone against everything that is his."[43]

The morality arising from this is characterized as childish and servile: failure to follow the divine instruction is excused by a self-issued dispensation which is "decidedly revolutionary"[44] and which cannot deny the continued existence of the old law and its power, but can only flout it unscrupulously. By this point at the latest, the personal engagement of the religious historian becomes obvious. By contrast, and with a complete lack of understanding of the seriousness of the apostle Paul's understanding of Jewish law, what results here is "a peculiar blend of fear and rashness, of a sense of guilt and defiance, which in the manner of the formerly enslaved, mixes freedom with the giddiness of dastardliness."[45] According to this analysis, for Jonas libertinism is the clearest feature of this position born of resentment, an anarchic sense of freedom "which counts indiscipline as proving oneself, even as a merit and exploit."[46] Jonas can quote the church father Irenaeus for these accusations, but at any rate he certainly cannot demonstrate from the sources the proximity, established by him, of the authentically revolutionary seriousness of Marcion to the evidently despised libertinism of Gnosticism in general. "To this extent," Jonas concludes a corresponding paragraph, "libertinism belongs at the center of the drastic Gnostic change."[47]

In a striking, parenthesized remark, the religious historian then puts himself in the position of the Gnostic, as if he had been there: "Vanity may also have been involved, to enjoy to the full one's own boldness in thought and deed, which the Gnostic dares in the certainty of his pneumatic quality; as indeed at all revolutionary times"—thus writes

[43] Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, part 1, 231.
[44] Ibid., 233.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid., 234.
[47] Ibid.

the twenty-five-year-old Ph.D. candidate Hans Jonas—"the heady words of self-intoxication are popular."[48]

IV

In Jonas's *Erinnerungen*, there follows the story of how his dissertation came about, which he places in the years 1925 to 1933, immediately following the story of his ultimately disappointed love for Hannah Arendt, who had told him in 1924 that she was in a romantic relationship with Heidegger.[49] Neither from Marcion nor from the libertines denounced by Irenaeus, for example, are there any indications regarding their vanity or other mischief. It is true that Irenaeus reports that the libertines did forbidden deeds without inhibition, but for the rest he refrains from psychological speculation, only then to state all the more clearly that some of them secretly "seduced women, and women whom they desired they lured away from their men."[50]

This kind of libertinism appeared to have become a practical problem for Jonas. In *Erinnerungen*, he reports, still impressed after more than sixty years: "Heidegger had his eye on her. She was by no means the only one, for as I found out only later, he had taken an interest in female students from time to time, and I have not heard of any who put up a fight."[51] In view of his admission that he himself had been fascinated by Heidegger, on reading *Erinnerungen* one cannot escape the impression that Jonas was tormented by jealousy and disappointment on account of the romantic relationship between Arendt and Heidegger, and even sixty years later was only able to deal with his disappointment by recourse to a theory of seduction.[52] Jonas could have seen that this theory was wrong from the biographical literature on Arendt, which was still available to him: nor does the correspondence between Arendt and Heidegger, which was published in 1998, paint any different picture.[53]

[48] Ibid.
[49] Jonas, *Erinnerungen*, 116–17.
[50] Carl Andresen, ed., *Die Gnosis: Erster Band: Zeugnisse der Kirchenväter* (Zürich/Munich: Artemis-Verlag, 1979), 401.
[51] Jonas, *Erinnerungen*, 114.
[52] Ibid., 114–15.
[53] Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982); Safranski, *Ein Meister aus Deutschland*, 166–67; Elzbieta Ettinger, *Hannah Arendt/Martin Heidegger* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995); Hannah Arendt and Martin Heidegger, *Briefe 1925–1975* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1998).

According to a contemporary witness, Heidegger at any rate presented not so much the image of a professor as that of "a commodore on the bridge of an ocean liner," and spoke with "a medium-loud voice, without using notes," whilst "into the voice there flowed an extraordinary intellect, but even more, a force of will..., particularly when the topic became dangerous."[54] Of whom might Jonas have been thinking when he wrote of the "heady words of self-intoxication"? And how might he have felt when it was he of all people, who having bidden her farewell after Arendt's confession of his love for her, gave Heidegger Arendt's address after she had left Marburg in 1926 without doing so herself?[55]

By this point at the latest, all speculative psychological interpretation that is not adequately backed up by the sources must come to an end. It nonetheless remains to be asked why Jonas neglected a different interpretation of Gnosticism, which would have to have been apparent to him after closer reading of the sources that became available to him later, and was not prepared to modify his "pessimistic" general interpretation, which was geared to the experience of deficiency. The fourth chapter of the fourth edition of his book, which appeared in 1964, shows that the Valentinian *Evangelium Veritatis* ('Gospel of Truth'), which became known more than thirty years after his dissertation, became an interpretative problem for him. For the initial lines of this gospel, which Jonas also quotes, sound anything but pessimistic: they express not so much the desperate search for something quite different, as joy at the experience of a grace received suddenly: "The true gospel is joy for those who have received grace from the father of truth, to recognize him through the power of the Word [*logos*] that came from the *pleroma*."[56]

In the interpretation of this Valentinian text, Jonas cannot avoid dealing with the concept of hope, which was called on repeatedly. Here, Jonas persists in penetrating analyses based on logical argument, as if he wanted to avoid the undeniable circumstance that Gnostics are writing here of richness and hope, of the nullity of fear, of forgetting

[54] Safranski, *Ein Meister aus Deutschland*, 161.
[55] Ibid., 171; Arendt and Heidegger, *Briefe*, 59.
[56] Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, part 1, 409.

and of lies, as if in this matter he could not acknowledge that that God of which this gospel[57] speaks is an entirely different one than the alien and unrecognizable other God of Marcion.

For reasons that we shall not go into further here, Jonas had reasons, critical in relation to Utopia, for being skeptical of hope and replacing it with the concept of responsibility.[58] Despite all his professionalism in the enterprise of philosophy, in religious studies research and philological criticism, he must always have been aware that right from the start, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist* was a political book which, in the superficially apolitical situation in Marburg, could only be directed against that protagonist of a conservative revolution who overpowered Jonas rhetorically and objectively, and cost him his happiness in love: Martin Heidegger, for whom "care" (*Sorge*) and not "hope" had become the central concept of his work. Jonas acknowledged this indirectly: "My dissertation topic of 'gnosis' was potentially a thousand times more political than Hannah Arendt's work on 'The Concept of Love in Augustine.'"[59]

[57] See "Das wahre Evangelium," in *Das Neue Testament und frühchristliche Schriften*, trans. and annotated by Klaus Berger and Christiane Nord (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1999), 1050–65.

[58] Hans Jonas, *Das Prinzip Verantwortung: Versuch einer Ethik für die technologische Zivilisation* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel-Verlag, 1984), 347–48. Translates by Hans Jonas as *The Imperative of Responsibility* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 194–95.

[59] Jonas, *Erinnerungen*, 124.

CHAPTER FOUR

HANS JONAS AND RESEARCH ON GNOSTICISM FROM A CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVE[1]

Kurt Rudolph

The work of the so-called humanities, cultural studies, or social sciences is, as we know, determined by different research strategies. Apart from the work areas as such—in other words, the objects on which the researcher's attention is focused—it is above all the methodological approaches and the situation concerning sources, in other words the various types of evidence, that strongly influence the progress of research. The concept of the paradigm shift, introduced by Thomas S. Kuhn, can be readily extrapolated to cultural sciences, as often occurs, since there too, the process of advancing appropriation of past and present occurrences depends on certain conscious or mostly unconscious "preconceptions." The present day in particular shows, often in a fairly dramatic way, how the increasing chronological and spatial expansion of the scientific view is accompanied by increasing reflection on the researcher's acts of "commission and omission." One need only recall the question of "ethnocentricities" in these areas.

Historical research in particular, in our case the history of religion, has had to undergo paradigm shifts time and again, often quite late compared with neighboring disciplines. This can readily be demonstrated in the area dealing with ancient gnosis, or Gnosticism (as it is frequently termed in English and French). One challenge is the change in the way questions are formulated in relation to this subject matter

[1] Translated from the German by Margret Vince. Original lecture given at the University of Konstanz on May 15, 1998, under the title "Hans Jonas als Gnosisforscher" (Hans Jonas as a Researcher on Gnosticism), on the occasion of the opening of the Hans Jonas archive there; reprinted in the Estonian periodical *Trames* 5 (2001): 291–301. Revised and expanded for the lecture series at the University of Oldenburg on November 29, 2001. See now Wolfgang E. Müller, ed., *Hans Jonas: Von der Gnosisforschung zur Verantwortungsethik* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2003), 25–39; reprinted in *Weiterwohnlichkeit der Welt. Zur Aktualität von Hans Jonas*, ed. Christian Wiese and Eric Jacobson (Berlin: Philo, 2003), 93–107.

in general, while another challenge is posed by the material gained through new discoveries. The material of religious history cannot be controled or predicted. New discoveries are often the trigger not only for a widening and deepening of the research area, but also for a change in perspective, and even the method in general. This becomes apparent in the example of research on Gnosticism, which became so dominant for Hans Jonas in his early academic endeavors. Aside from the heresiological apologetics of older Christian literature, which has preserved for us some pieces of evidence of the ancient Gnostics but which had a prejudiced attitude toward them, it is the work of the more modern church historiography since the end of the eighteenth and then the nineteenth centuries which initiated not only a pioneering critique of the traditional sources but also showed itself to be more open to the theological concerns of Gnosticism. Representative names include Johann Lorenz von Mosheim, Ferdinand Christian Baur, Richard Adalbert Lipsius, Adolf Hilgenfeld, and Adolf von Harnack. The strangeness of some Gnostic ideas, which can be explained by neither Christian nor Greek traditions, was often attributed to oriental, even Asiatic (e.g., Buddhist) origins, or else people resorted to explanations founded on the old fertile ground of magic. The viewpoint taken was, however, primarily one from the stance of ecclesiastical history or history of dogma. In other words, Gnosticism was a topic of the early history of Christianity; for Harnack, it was the example of an "acute secularization of Christianity."[2] A change began only around the turn of the century with the emergence of the Göttingen-based "History of Religions School" (*Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*) which introduced, as above all Wilhelm Bousset did, a religious-historical view of Gnosticism and thus asserted a new "paradigm" of research, which strictly speaking still holds sway to a great extent to this day. The core elements of this view were the following theses:

1. Gnosticism is a topic not only of the so-called early church history, but also of New Testament exegesis.
2. The now expanded bodies of evidence (sources) show an autonomous world which arose before, or at least independently of, Christianity.

[2] Adolf von Harnack, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, vol. 1 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1909), 243ff.

3. Its origins lie primarily in the East, i.e., in Persian and late Babylonian sources, not in Greek ones.
4. It is a product of Hellenistic syncretism.
5. Its influence on Christian teaching and practice has not been inconsiderable, in spite of its rejection and elimination as "heresy."

This new approach was spurred on to a great extent by the discoveries of new original sources, some of which had been known for some time but had not been properly included in the research process. We may mention the Coptic texts of the Askew Codex (*Pistis Sophia*) and Brucianus or of Berlin Codex 8502, which was not edited until after the Second World War, but which gradually became more widely known from 1898 onwards (especially through Carl Schmitt). After this come the Manichaean finds from the Turfan oasis (1904–1913), and above all the Mandaica, i.e., the extensive literature of those adherents of the Mandaean religion still living in Iraq and Iran. It was above all Rudolf Bultmann in Marburg who, as a representative of the second generation of the History of Religions School, made it his task to make these bodies of evidence usable for exegesis of the New Testament, in particular for the Gospel according to John and the *Corpus Paulinum*. One should mention his two fundamental studies for this, "Der religionsgeschichtliche Hintergrund des Prologs zum Johannesevangelium," and "Die Bedeutung der neuerschlossenen mandäischen und manichäischen Quellen für das Verständnis des Johannesevangeliums."[3] Hans Jonas came into contact with this exegetic "paradigm" in Marburg, when in 1923 he followed his philosophy teacher Martin Heidegger there, and then in 1924 took part for the first time in a New Testament seminar under Bultmann.

The path taken by the philosophy student Jonas into Protestant theology was unusual, and can be explained by the fact that as a Jew, as he himself writes, he was interested "in the realm of religion." In Berlin, he had already attended lectures at the Hochschule für die

[3] These two essays, "Der religionsgeschichtliche Hintergrund des Prologs zum Johannesevangelium" (The Religious-historical Background of the Prologue to the Gospel according to John) (1923) and "Die Bedeutung der neuerschlossenen mandäischen und manichäischen Quellen für das Verständnis des Johannesevangeliums" (The Significance of the Newly Discovered Mandaean and Manichaean Sources for the Understanding of the Gospel according to John) (1925) are reprinted in Rudolf Bultmann, *Exegetica: Aufsätze zur Erforschung des Neuen Testaments*, ed. Erich Dinkler (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1967), 10–35 and 55–104.

Wissenschaft des Judentums (Academy for the Science of Judaism), and had also heard lectures at the Friedrich-Wilhelm University by the leading religious historian of the Old Testament, Hugo Gressmann. The incipient friendship between Heidegger and Bultmann prompted him to attend the classes given by the Marburg New Testament scholar. On July 23, 1925, as is shown by the records of Bultmann's New Testament seminar which have now been published, Jonas gave a paper on "Die Gnosis im Johannesevangelium" (Gnosticism in the Gospel according to John).[4] That was evidently his entry into a field that was to occupy him for decades.

In 1928 he submitted his doctoral thesis in philosophy, "Über den Begriff der Gnosis" (On the Concept of Gnosis), which appeared in print in 1930.[5] The continuation of this work then culminated in the first volume, published in 1934, of *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist: Die mythologische Gnosis*, which appeared even though its author had left Germany on account of the fact that the Nazis had now come to power. Bultmann provided the volume with a preface that gave the author a glowing reference, and outlined precisely the book's importance for research on Gnosticism. Continuation of the work had to cease, for reasons that are well known, and which call to mind the unforgivable disaster of the time from 1933 to 1945 in our country. The first half of the second part, already partly typeset in 1934, did not appear until 1954. In its preface, Jonas describes why he was unable to return to the work of his youth easily. For this reason, this part remains a fragment, even if in 1993 Jonas was able to submit the still extant parts of the second half on which he had nevertheless continued to work after 1945, supplemented by some other studies on the subject of Gnosticism.[6]

During his exile, Jonas had turned his philosophical interests to another area, "a subject far removed from the earlier field of work." Finally, after 1979—when his book *Das Prinzip Verantwortung* appeared

[4] See Bernd Jaspert, ed., *Sachgemäße Exegese: Die Protokolle aus Rudolf Bultmanns neutestamentlichen Seminaren 1921–1951* (Marburg: N. G. Elwert, 1996), 39.

[5] This work is identical to the introduction and chapter 1 of Hans Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist. 2. Teil: Von der Mythologie zur mystischen Philosophie*, ed. Kurt Rudolph (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993); and see Hans Jonas, *Augustin und das paulinische Freiheitsproblem: Eine philosophische Studie zum pelagianischen Streit*, 2nd ed. with an introduction by James M. Robinson (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1965), 15; Kurt Rudolph, "Der Mandäismus in der neueren Gnosisforschung," in *Gnosis: Festschrift für Hans Jonas*, ed. Barbara Aland (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1978), 244–77, esp. 245.

[6] See Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, part 2, 224ff.

(later to appear in English as *The Imperative of Responsibility*)—it was his work in this subject area that made his name known far beyond the field of Gnosticism research in Germany too. However, his attention nevertheless returned time and again to Gnosticism, including for reasons that were at work below the surface, as it were, and to which we shall return briefly.

This doubtless only sporadic continuation of work on his old subject area resulted from the unexpected surfacing of new Coptic Gnostic texts from Nag Hammadi, which had been discovered in 1945 but which only gradually became known from 1948 onwards. Jonas took up this first extensive original corpus of Gnostic literature early on, and assessed it from his point of view. He also intervened in the discussion of some of the most important texts in this find, for example the *Apocryphon of John*, the *Gospel of Truth*, and the *Hypostasis of the Archons*.

His opinion, first published in 1962 in a longer discussion in the *Journal of Religion* on *The Secret Books of the Egyptian Gnostics* by Jean Doresse, was then included in an expanded form, in a supplementary volume to the third edition of the first volume of the book on Gnosticism (1964), namely as the fourth chapter, under the heading "Neue Texte der Gnosis" (New Gnostic Texts).[7] Prior to that, in 1958 Jonas had submitted an English version of his book on Gnosticism, entitled *The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity*. As he said in the preface, this followed the point of view of the German work, but was different "in scope, in organization, and in literary intention."[8] Here too, the second edition in 1963 was supplemented to take account of the Nag Hammadi texts. This book, particularly in the paperback edition, has had a great influence up until the present day, and is often used as a text for students. In contrast to its German predecessor, it is easier to read for present-day readers, since by using the English language, Jonas no longer used the "Heidegger style." A less-well-known brief summary of his interpretation of Gnosticism was included in 1967 in the third volume of the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.[9]

His other contributions on the subject of Gnosticism dealt either with the problem of Plotinus's position on Gnosticism (1959; 1964,

[7] Ibid., 377–418.

[8] Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity*, 2nd rev. ed. (1963; Boston: Beacon Press, 1991), xvii.

[9] Hans Jonas, "Gnosticism," in *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, vol. 3, ed. Paul Edwards (New York: Macmillan, 1967; repr. 1972), 336–42.

1969), a topic he never gave up,[10] or the debate concerning the Jewish-biblical contribution to Gnosticism. This debate had become very topical through the Nag Hammadi texts, as illustrated for example in connection with the debate with Gilles Quispel at the centennial meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in 1964 in Nashville, Tennessee.[11] Finally, he dealt with the question he had initiated with his dissertation (1928 and 1930), that of the "typological and historical demarcation of the phenomenon of Gnosticism," which he posed once again in 1966, in an impressive paper given in Messina, Italy, at the first international congress on the origins of Gnosticism.[12] The general problem (which was explosive in terms of the history of ideas as well as in terms of methodology) that was raised repeatedly, above all by critics of Hans Jonas, he dealt with in detail in his essay on "Gnosticism, Existentialism, and Nihilism."[13] This essay can be counted among the precursors of his later philosophy of *The Imperative of Responsibility*.

Following on from this documentary overview of Hans Jonas's research on Gnosticism is the question of its significance in terms of content, and its further influence. Without doubt, in 1934 *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist* marked an important advance into the research landscape, one that remains current even today. This much even the critics have confirmed, more or less unwillingly. Unfortunately, the circumstances of the times prevented a greater resonance then. The only review of the book in a German academic journal—which appeared in 1936 in *Gnomon*—originated, typically enough, from the renowned American religious historian Arthur D. Nock.[14] He faced the book

[10] Reprinted in Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, part 2, 224–327 (fragments on Plotinus).

[11] Hans Jonas, "Response to G. Quispel's Gnosticism and the New Testament: 1. The Hymn of the Pearl. 2. Jewish Origins of Gnosticism," in *The Bible in Modern Scholarship: Papers Read at the 100th Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, Dec. 28–30, 1964*, ed. J. Philip Hyatt (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1965), 279–93; reprinted in idem, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, part 2, 346–59.

[12] Hans Jonas, "Delimitations of the Gnostic Phenomenon: Typological and Historical," in *Le Origini dello Gnosticismo, Colloquio di Messina, 13–18 Aprile 1966*, ed. Ugo Bianchi (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967), 90–104; German version in Kurt Rudolph, ed., *Gnosis und Gnostizismus* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1975), 626–45.

[13] Hans Jonas, "Gnosticism, Nihilism, and Existentialism," *Social Research* 19 (1952): 430–52; idem, "Gnosis, Existentialismus, und Nihilismus," *Kerygma und Dogma* 6 (1960), 155–71.

[14] Reprinted in Arthur D. Nock, *Essays on Religion and the Ancient World*, ed. Zeph Stewart (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 444–51; German translation in Rudolph, ed., *Gnosis und Gnostizismus*, 374–86.

somewhat at a loss, since he did not really grasp its intention. The new edition together with the publication of the second part in 1954 achieved greater success. Nevertheless, the book did have a more or less unofficial effect before that, and in fact above all through Rudolf Bultmann and his students, who never disowned it. To the generation that studied after the war and dealt with the subject, the work brought indelible benefits, comparable to a *leitmotif* running through the plethora of ambiguous sources. However, one had to master the language of Heidegger, and reading *Being and Time* was absolutely indispensable preparation.

In the preface to his 1958 English-language book on Gnosticism, Jonas later described the intention that he was pursuing with *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*. For him, it had not been a question of contributing more to the rich field of philological-historical individual research, but of achieving something very different, yet complementary—a philosophical interpretation: "to grasp the spirit that spoke out of these voices, and in the light of it, to give a comprehensible unity back to the amazing diversity." Accordingly, he was concerned with the classical search for the "essence" of a historical "phenomenon," and he was convinced that this was possible. It was the philosopher here, rather than the historian or philologist, who was thinking about Gnosticism, and not just in order to document it, but also with the aim of understanding a significant period of Western humanity, and of illuminating its relevance for "our human understanding in general."[15]

The program was carried out on the one hand with the tools that Jonas had gained from Heidegger; in other words, the fundamental-ontological analytic of *Dasein* or existential interpretation.[16] He also took up the cultural-morphological idea of Oswald Spengler, according to which something quite new could be demonstrated behind the historical manifestations, namely a kind of "cultural soul" which is expressed through "pseudomorphosis," hidden in the conventional, available conceptual language.[17] What he was thinking of there was the so-called Arabic culture, which for Jonas became the exemplar for the culture of the eastern Mediterranean world which, according to him, was determined by the "spirit of late antiquity." Incidentally, Spengler

[15] Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, xvii.

[16] Hans Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist, 1. Teil: Die mythologische Gnosis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1988), 90f.

[17] Ibid., 73f.; Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, 22 and 36.

too used the Mandaica for his documentation, and used the idea of the "redeemed Redeemer," which he adopted from Richard Reitzenstein. Although Jonas rejected the idea of isolated cultural monads and even though Spengler's dilettantism did not escape him, he was convinced by the "methodical-hermeneutic fruitfulness" of his approach.[18]

Against the background of these conditions, he now had to deal with research into Gnosticism that had been carried out up until then. He undertook this above all in the long introductory chapter "Zur Geschichte und Methodologie der Forschung" (On the History and Methodology of Research).[19] This is a brilliantly written essay which every researcher on Gnosticism should read, since it demonstrates convincingly how the method that had been customary until then, that of religious-historical/philological research, remained attached only to the layer of evidence, to the "objectivizations," and attempted to investigate the essence and origin of Gnosticism from its circumstances and composition. From Jonas's viewpoint, that resembled more an "alchemy of ideas" than the question of the actual historical central ground or background which holds the various pieces of evidence together and enables them to be recognized as the expression of a particular "*Dasein* position."[20] The classification as "syncretism" does not lead to an answer to the question of the essence, since this describes only the cultural-religious surface, but not the deeper "autonomous core of essence."[21]

What Jonas has in mind here above all is the otherwise commendable work of Wilhelm Bousset,[22] but he also criticizes Adolf von Harnack and especially Hans Heinrich Schaeder, whom he accuses of having

[18] On the role of Spengler in Jonas, see Michael Waldstein, "Hans Jonas's Construct 'Gnosticism': Analysis and Critique," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 8 (2000), 341–72, esp. 352ff. However, this detailed article does not take account of the critical remarks by Jonas himself, that he takes too little notice of the actual direction in the context of contemporary research on Gnosticism. Jonas did not wish to present a philological-historical examination, but rather, for the first time, to define a coherent, "essential" background in the Gnostic sources, in contrast to the heresiological disparagements and the religious-historical attempts to make advances with the catchword "syncretism." He should not be blamed, in the present day, for the fact that for this, he used the categories for interpretation and "*Dasein* analyses" provided by Heidegger—as well as Spengler's ideas. At any rate, with them he obtained fruitful results for religious-historical research, which should no longer renounce Jonas's interpretations.

[19] Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, part 1, 1–91.

[20] Ibid., 21f.

[21] Ibid., 77.

[22] Ibid., 27–49.

a Grecocentric and neo-humanist viewpoint.[23] By contrast, Jonas discovered in Gnosticism a non-Greek and at the same time—in disassociation from Harnack—a non-Christian spirit. In his view, Gnosticism represents a "revolutionary break" with ancient and biblical tradition. The question of the real ground, in other words the foundation and the place of emergence, causes Jonas to take up questions of psychology and sociology, wherein he defends the precedence of the "existential ground" over both research strategies (including that of Max Weber).[24] Incidentally, Jonas follows the tradition of the History of Religions School here, reinforced by Spengler's thesis that the East was the place of origin of the new world view, in which the Orient's resistance against the Western-Roman seizure of power becomes visible.[25] On the other hand, Spengler emphasized the "mysteriousness of the origin," and understood the characterization of the "oriental" in the sense that it left behind it the "question of the genesis of content."[26]

From this, it becomes clear that Jonas regarded Gnosticism merely as a special case of a world view which found expression, "objectivized," in other areas too: in the mysteries, the Hermetica, neo-Platonism, Jewish apocalypticism, and early Christianity.[27] These are not so-called influences, but participate in a new world view. The fact that for Jonas, Gnosticism plays a primary role here, and indeed not just as a layer of evidence, can be gathered from the fact that he can certainly speak of a "Gnostic age"[28] and is interested in tracking down the transformation of Gnosticism in the thought of late antiquity.[29] What he is concerned with here is not the literary connections in the foreground, but only the uniform existential ground that is to be discovered behind the evidential worlds, and ultimately determines the common ground of a "new world feeling."[30] In the second volume, Jonas then described this transformation from Gnostic mythology into the mysticism and philosophy of late antiquity, on the basis of several examples.

Jonas understandably obtains the starting point for carrying out his entire program from the layer of evidence or objectivization, i.e.,

[23] Ibid., 49–58.

[24] Ibid., 58ff.

[25] Ibid., 70ff.

[26] Ibid., 77, n. 1.

[27] Ibid., 80f.

[28] Ibid., 64.

[29] Ibid., 88f.

[30] Ibid., 74.

from the mythological traditions of Gnosticism. In order to grasp its "existential ground" right from the start, he starts in the first chapter with an analysis of the "*logos* of Gnosticism." In my opinion this is an excellent analysis, even if certain pieces of evidence dominate it, above all those of the Mandaeans, which belong to a quite specific literary form, namely the soul ascension songs of Left Ginza. The second chapter describes the "*Dasein* position" of the Gnostics and works out their essential characteristics: the anti-cosmic dualism, the rule of fate (*heimarmene*), the doctrine of souls, demonology, the idea of redemption, and finally the revolutionary traits that are repeatedly manifested in the evidence[31] and which can be demonstrated in the pseudomorphosis of individual concepts—such as pneuma, psyche, and "self."[32]

Finally, the main types of mythological and theological speculation are presented. In this third chapter, Jonas introduces an influential typology which to some extent is still used today, even if now and again other names are used for it. He distinguishes the Iranian type with its fundamental dualism of origin, as represented in the most pure form by Manichaeism, from the Syrian-Egyptian type of emanation dualism, which represents the main form of the Gnostic sources and which is the actual Gnostic one.[33] The Nag Hammadi texts too belong to this latter type, as is demonstrated in the fourth chapter, which was added subsequently. The Mandaean texts,[34] to which Jonas gives precedence, represent a mixed form of the two types, but here too, in his view, the "guilt myth" of the Syrian-Egyptian type appears to be the more appropriate expression of the "feeling of being alive" of the old Nasoreans (Mandaean priests).[35]

Two further main types are the "Alexandrian-ecclesiastical," in the form of Origen and early monastic mysticism, and the neo-Platonic (Plotinus). Jonas deals with both types in more detail in the second volume, where he explains that in these two manifestations, the concept of emanation and corruption is a firm part of the philosophical system and evidence of a trait held in common with Gnosticism.[36] In mysticism, according to Jonas, it is the internalized, step-by-step ascent of

[31] Ibid., 214–51.
[32] Ibid., 210ff., 238ff., 251ff.; Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, part 2, 24–65.
[33] Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, part 1, 328f.
[34] Ibid., 262–83.
[35] Ibid., 283.
[36] Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, part 2, 3f.

the soul as the practice of meditative contemplation and anticipation of *eschaton*.[37]

The understanding of Gnosticism outlined here was maintained in Jonas's later relevant works, as his American book on Gnosticism in particular shows. In both his work with the new Coptic materials and in his 1966 lecture in Messina, mentioned earlier, he was at pains to prove that his interpretation of the fundamental characteristics of Gnosticism continued to stand up to current research. Those elements of his interpretation of Gnosticism that continue to have an effect to this day include above all the following:

1. The consistent and—in my opinion, successful—attempt at an overall interpretation from an existential basic principle of deprivation of world-hood (*Entweltlichung*) and an anti-cosmic dualism, which is understood as the expression of a revolutionary new *Dasein* position. (That this is a "rational reconstruction" with the aid of a particular terminology, namely that of Heideggerian existentialism, is of course true epistemologically; but that does not alter the fact that it was hermeneutically fruitful, and remains so).
2. Summing up the evidence according to particular guidelines, and typologizing it.
3. Incorporating or taking into account systems from late antiquity that are of philosophical and theological origin, such as Plotinus and Origen.
4. Tracing the continuation of Gnostic content in the form of transformations or metamorphoses in mystical traditions, which were able to become a vehicle of appropriation of Gnostic inheritance.
5. The first consistent inclusion of the Mandaean traditions, which represent the only extensive bodies of evidence in an Eastern Aramaic dialect and moreover hand down a remarkable ritualistic practice.
6. The similarly consistent consideration of Manichaeism, which was a real Gnostic world religion, founded by the historical figure Mani.[38]

[37] Ibid., 99ff., 155ff.
[38] See my commemorative article "Hans Jonas und die Manichäismusforschung," in Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis und spätantike Religionsgeschichte. Gesammelte Aufsätze* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), 773–81.

A series of critical questions can of course be directed at Jonas's ideas. Apart from the question raised most recently, concerning the legitimacy of the "umbrella term" or metalinguistic concept of Gnosticism in general, some of the essential traits of Gnosticism listed by Jonas have been contested—for example, the anti-cosmic dualism, which is not as clearly documented in all texts, and not at all in Manichaeism, as one would expect. In his book, *Rethinking "Gnosticism": An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category*, Michael Williams has collated these arguments astutely.[39] In place of the term "gnosis," or the term "Gnosticism" which is preferred in English usage, Williams would like to introduce a more appropriate one: "biblical demiurgical tradition"[40] or "biblical demiurgy."[41] With this, one could highlight the most important trait of the tradition in question, namely the discourse concerning the creation of the world by a demiurge below the actual highest being.

Now the term "gnosis" (or "Gnosticism") is certainly not always a happy one, in particular on account of its inflationary use in the history of religion and history of ideas, which more often blurs boundaries than clearly defines them. Gnosticism is a kind of auxiliary term which has risen from the heresiological object language to become a metalinguistic term: with it, it has been and still is readily possible to gain a grasp of the content of texts and reports. Williams forgets that academic language has its own rules. General terms ("umbrella terms") serve not to cover all the relevant contents uniformly, but are intended to enable classification or typologies in general. There will always be a hiatus between details and universals. Apart from the problem of terminology in question here, one should consider that religions and worldviews are mostly quite pluralistic and not uniform.

Furthermore, the term "demiurge," which—as we know—originates in Platonist philosophy and is occasionally used by the heresiologists (such as Irenaeus), is lacking in the Gnostic sources. Moreover, it is precisely this concept of demiurgy that is preferred by Williams that expresses how the Gnostics viewed the world, the cosmos, so that Jonas's statement that anti-cosmic dualism was a prominent feature of Gnosticism is not refuted by that at any rate. Even if this feature is not

[39] Waldstein, "Hans Jonas's Construct 'Gnosticism,'" 342 and 370f., also naturally refers to it, without dealing more closely with the problems that arise through this.

[40] Michael A. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism": An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 51 and 265f.

[41] Ibid., 218.

retained very consistently in individual layers of evidence, it remains fundamentally in the disempowerment of the creator being in relation to the *deus absconditus*.[42]

There are in addition certain doubts about the meaningfulness of the layers of evidence cited, above all about the inclusion of Philo and Plotinus in the area of Gnosticism. Associated with this is the problem of the so-called mind of late antiquity as a dominant world view, above all when in this connection, Jonas takes as his model Spengler's idea of the soul of civilization and calls it a "genuine total principle."[43] The existential *Dasein* analysis is of course bound to the contemporary philosophy of Heidegger, but has a better starting point than the cultural morphology of Spengler, since through its access to the "existential ground," which penetrates behind the objectivizations, it is close to sociological analysis. On the other hand, the language or terminology used by Jonas in his German books on Gnosticism has in recent years been subjected to ideological-critical examination from the philosophical side, namely with regard to his teacher, Heidegger.[44]

The striking parallelism of some *logoi* in the description of the "*Dasein* position" of the Gnostics in Jonas and of early twentieth-century people in Heidegger necessarily leads to ambivalent conclusions which can be discussed only briefly here. Does this character of "fit" in the terminology have something to do with the notion that Heidegger—above all in *Being and Time* (originally published in German as *Sein und Zeit* in 1927)—participated in the Gnostic inheritance of the view of the world,

[42] See now also Karl-Wolfgang Tröger, *Die Gnosis: Heilslehre und Ketzerglaube* (Freiburg/Breisgau: Herder, 2001), 33. Also Waldstein, "Hans Jonas's Construct 'Gnosticism,'" seems to dispute a "tendency towards deprivation of world-hood (*Entweltlichung*)" in Gnosticism, which as far as I am aware is not possible. The characteristics of the *Apocryphon of John*, which are cited briefly for that purpose at the end (ibid., 370ff.), are in no way convincing, since they can certainly be interpreted differently than in the light of the neo-Platonic model, propounded by Waldstein, of an "idiosyncratic eddy in the broad stream of Hellenistic Judaism" (ibid., 372). The research thus actually falls in the period before Jonas, described above, and mistakes the typical character of the gnostic sources. Let us not forget the interpretations by Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, part 1, 377–418, which are still worth reading.

[43] Ibid., 74.

[44] See, e.g., Micha Brumlik, *Die Gnostiker: Der Traum von der Selbsterlösung des Menschen* (Frankfurt am Main: Eichborn, 1992); Michael Pauen, *Dithyrambiker des Untergangs: Gnostizismus in Ästhetik und Philosophie der Moderne* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1994); Wolfgang Baum, *Gnostische Elemente im Denken Martin Heideggers? Eine Studie auf der Grundlage der Religionsphilosophie von Hans Jonas* (Neuried: Ars Una Verlagsgesellschaft, 1997); on Brumlik, see the discussion by Michael Pauen in *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 41 (1993): 777f.

or did his student, through the use of this language, draw up a "Gnostic fundamental ontology"[45] which brings to light the Gnosticism of late antiquity in the first place? It is not difficult to find Gnostic structures or motifs in Heidegger, as has been observed repeatedly, including by his contemporary Karl Jaspers:[46] the nihilist rejection of traditional metaphysics and its concept of God; the degradation (*Verfallenheit*) or "thrownness" (*Geworfenheit*) of the human being into the plain "man" of existence, which can only be changed by insight and thinking; and the awareness of this situation, through a kind of "self-empowerment of the subject" (M. Pauen). In those times, which he saw as being in need of salvation, Heidegger then saw help in the form of the "Führer," a kind of savior who can guide one to the interior and to the essence (of mere existence).[47]

Now it has to be frankly admitted that Jonas, as a thinker who reflected deeply, certainly knew that some of his *logoi* were related to those of his former teacher. Thus he quite consciously fell back on Heidegger's concept of "thrownness" (*Geworfenheit*) and justified this.[48] After citing Mandaean texts on the fall of the soul as an expression of a Gnostic feeling of "having been thrown," he emphasizes that one could hardly resist the temptation, in view of the situation of *Dasein* in the world of the old Mandaeans (actually of their souls), of falling back, as an objective category,

> on the quite unmythological concept of "*Geworfenheit,*" as it was worked out in a peculiar analogy (but certainly also in a last, secularizing reclaiming of a theological tradition that started out from that epoch) in a modern analytic of *Dasein*, in Heidegger's *Being and Time*, as a fundamental category of *Dasein* in general (as "existentiale").[49]

Later, as we know, Jonas then explicitly took up the subject of the connection between Gnosticism, modern nihilism, and existentialism. "The success of the 'existentialist' reading of Gnosticism," said Jonas in a speech given on the occasion of the six-hundredth anniversary celebration of Heidelberg university in 1986, "invited one to read existentialism, and with it, the modern mind, more or less 'Gnostically.'"[50] "Existentialism, which had provided the means for a historical analysis, itself became embroiled in its results."[51]

[45] Thus Baum, *Gnostische Elemente*, 114.

[46] See Karl Jaspers, *Notizen zu Martin Heidegger*, ed. Hans Saner (Munich: R. Piper, 1978) (1989), index, under the headword "Gnosis"; Thomas Rentsch, *Martin Heidegger. Das Sein und der Tod* (Munich: R. Piper, 1989), 97ff., 185ff.; Pauen, *Dithyrambiker des Untergangs*, 255ff.; Baum, *Gnostische Elemente*, 124ff.

[47] See Rentsch, *Martin Heidegger*, 156f., 158ff.

[48] Jonas, *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*, part 1, 106f.

[49] Ibid., 107.

What can we gather from these circumstances for the picture of Gnosticism painted by Jonas? Certainly not that the recognition that it is influenced by Heideggerian categories proves it to be false, for in the relevant chapters of the "*logos* of Gnosticism" Jonas has quoted the decisive sources extensively, namely the Mandaean texts which were particularly suitable for this. Nor can it be a case of unmasking Heidegger and other modern thinkers as mere Gnostics. Nevertheless, Jonas's attempt at a phenomenological-hermeneutic analysis of Gnostic traditions from late antiquity, and their transformations in later consequences such as mysticism and esotericism, provides us even today with a model of this thinking and behavior, which, as an objectivization of a scientific reconstruction, represents a human form of behaving and thinking not as a mere singularity, but beyond space and time.[52]

One remaining important controversial aspect of Hans Jonas's understanding of Gnosticism is the question, still the subject of discussion, of the origin of Gnosticism, which these days has receded somewhat in favor of examination of what is actually present in the sources. Here, Jonas was committed to the existential-ontological answer, which had to precede every historical question. Related to this is the fact that he rejected any notion of Gnostic origins being rooted in early Judaism. Naturally he did not dispute in principle that the layer of evidence indicates a proportion of biblical and extra-biblical Jewish material. Today, however, most researchers on Gnosticism assume that this evidential value cannot have been just a formal basis for the emergence of Gnosticism. The historical question still remains as to where, and against the background of which tradition, the new feeling of *Dasein* arose, whose manifestations or "objectivizations" we have before us in the religious-historical sources. One would think here of the bearers of the tradition of the literature of wisdom who, open to critical thinking, posed the question of meaning in relation to the world and the creator and spoke up in the Book of Qoheleth (Ecclesiastes), where the relation of God to the world is expressed only extremely thinly, and where

[50] Hans Jonas, *Wissenschaft als persönliches Erlebnis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987), 19.

[51] Ibid., 18.

[52] On this, see Baum, *Gnostische Elemente*, 115ff., 246f.

little meaning is gleaned from earthly life.[53] In parallel with that, other texts deal with the disappearance of "wisdom" from the earthly realm. It seems to me that here, this Gnostic rejection of the world stands before us *in statu nascendi*. The apocalyptic, with its horizontal-dualistic conception of the world and pessimistic relation to the present, also contributed to that.

Regardless of the strong differentiation that present-day research has undertaken in relation to the religious-historical facts, when we ask about the effect and relevance to the present day of Hans Jonas's thought, it must be remembered that in philosophical examination, he achieved a status for the phenomenon of ancient Gnosticism that is still perceptible today, and which has also undoubtedly had a stimulating effect on religious-historical work. However, a not inconsiderable result is Jonas's own turning toward responsibility for the world, originating from the critique of Gnosticism's radical rejection of the world and its fatal effect. "There is something in Gnosticism that knocks at the door of our human existence [*Dasein*], and particularly our human existence in the 20th century," as Jonas expressed it in his 1973 retrospective in Stockholm:

> Here humanity is in a crisis [and] in some of the fundamental options which man can take in relation to the view of his position in the world, in his relationship to himself, to the Absolute and to his mortal human existence. There is certainly something in Gnosticism that helps one to understand humanity better than one would understand it if one had never got to know Gnosticism.[54]

The Gnostic appears as a kind of opposite type to the person that Jonas called for in the future in his later philosophy and who must—in the sense of a categorical imperative—take on responsibility for nature, the world, and humans, in other words for "creation." Contrary to the academic subject of his youth—Gnostic rejection of the world, and its condemnation of creation as a mistake—in view of the circumstances Jonas has raised responsibility for the world to a central ethical concept and recognized it as a decisive task for practical philosophy.[55]

[53] On this, see Rudolph, "Hans Jonas und die Manichäismusforschung," 163ff., 170ff., 183ff.

[54] Hans Jonas, "A Retrospective View," in *Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Gnosticism, Stockholm, August 20–25, 1973*, ed. Geo Widengren (Stockholm and Leiden: Almquist & Wiksell International and Brill, 1977), 1–15, here 13.

[55] On these connections in Jonas, see Nathalie Frogneux, *Hans Jonas où la vie dans le monde* (Paris/Brussels: De Boeck University, 2001). A summary of this is to be found in *Bulletin annuel de la Société belgo-luxembourgeoise d'Histoire des Religions* 2 (2000): 47–49.

CHAPTER FIVE

PAULINE THEOLOGY IN THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC: HANS JONAS, KARL BARTH, AND MARTIN HEIDEGGER

Benjamin Lazier

In the world of the academy, one line of reasoning goes, it is better to be despised than ignored, for at least someone has taken notice. Sometime in 1930, such platitudes must have crossed the mind of the twenty-seven-year-old Hans Jonas. For it was then that a reviewer for the *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, Hugo Koch, irritably dismissed a recently published book, Jonas's first, in its initial review.[1] The text in question, a concise study of the Pauline problem of freedom in the work of Augustine, stoked the ire of the well-regarded historian not so much on account of what Jonas said, but on account of how he said it. "Had I but a suspicion" that the text perpetrated linguistic crimes such as "phenomenological," "existential-ontological structure," and worst of all, "the objectified reality of the act," he wrote, "I would have refused to review it." Another referee belittled the idiom as insufferable *Kauderwelsch*, unintelligible jabber.[2] Koch himself thought such language *einen groben Unfug*, a resonant term for disorderly conduct "through which German scholarship makes itself ridiculous before the rest of the world." For such brazen impunity against the Holy Ghost of the German language, Koch condemned the latter-day Jonas to three days captivity in the belly of a great fish.[3]

That Koch should have done so was not without warrant. Even Jonas's teacher Rudolf Bultmann, on whose assurances the house of Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht published the piece in the first place, later

[1] Hans Jonas, *Augustin und das paulinische Freiheitsproblem* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1930).

[2] Gustav Krüger, "Augustin und das paulinische Freiheitsproblem," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 49 (1930): 494–501, here 500.

[3] Hugo Koch, "Augustin und das paulinische Freiheitsproblem," *Theologische Literaturzeitung* 2: 20 (1930): 469–70. For Jonas's recollections of the saga, see Hans Jonas, *Erinnerungen*, based on conversations with Rachel Salamander, ed. Christian Wiese (Frankfurt: Insel, 2003), 238–40.

felt compelled to apologize for the linguistic temerity of his talented protégé.[4] So, too, did Jonas quickly come to rue the "overburdened jargon" which he had earlier so eagerly embraced.[5] The difficulties of the text's language derived in part from the novelty of Heideggerian categories, though by 1930, three years after the publication of *Being and Time*, such rhetoric was hardly unknown in the philosophical world. Jonas apprenticed with Heidegger in the mid-1920s in Marburg, and his essay had its partial origin in Heidegger's seminar.

Still, Koch's judgment was premature. If the self-reflexivity Jonas brought to his method of inquiry indeed bordered on the maddening, it also bore considerable fruit, above all in an outline for a program of "demythologization"—an innovation of lasting consequence in the history of theological thinking—later developed and applied by Rudolf Bultmann.[6] So, too, does the Augustine text mark the origins of a comprehensive intellectual project, even if it does not do so alone. It has as its indispensable complement—its completion, really—the plan for an "existential analysis" of the Pauline mode of being, which Jonas first outlined in a letter to Bultmann in 1929. Jonas thought the letter important enough to return to it thirty-five years later. With several crucial emendations, it formed the basis of an essay called "Philosophical Meditation on Paul, *Epistle to the Romans*, Chapter 7," a 1964 contribution to a *Festschrift* for his teacher. In retrospect, this letter and essay contain *in nuce* the foundation of his philosophical career, the unfolding of which discloses itself as a profoundly hostile and fundamentally Jewish response to the Pauline condition. This understanding of Paul was in crucial ways Karl Barth's understanding, yet translated (and thereby transformed) into a Heideggerian idiom. Jonas referred

[4] See Bultmann's foreword to the first volume of *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*. Bultmann threatened to resign his editorial leadership of a prominent series of studies in the religion and literature of the Old and New Testaments should the publisher have refused to see it into print. See Jonas, *Erinnerungen*, 239.

[5] Writing to Scholem from London in 1933, Jonas hoped to enlist Scholem's aid in moving to Palestine and securing for him some sort of professional affiliation with the Hebrew University. He thought an "apology" in order for his youthful excess. Jonas to Scholem, December 14, 1933, Gershom Scholem Papers, Jewish National and University Library, Jerusalem.

[6] The outline for the program came in an appendix, "On the Hermeneutic Structure of Dogma." It appears inspired in part by Heideggerian hermeneutics and was likely modeled on the Heideggerian project of *Destruktion*. See, for example, James M. Robinson, "Interpretation in Contemporary Theology. VIII. The Pre-history of Demythologization," which serves as the introduction to the second edition (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Rupert, 1965) of Jonas's *Augustin* book, 65–77.

to this move as a *Rückübersetzung*: both a *re*-translation and a translation *back* into the more fundamental categories he thought adequate to the question of "Being as such."[7]

This move was enabled in part by the fact that Heidegger, though born and reared a Catholic, had by the early 1920s drunk deeply from the well of Barth's Protestantism.[8] Barth, the crisis theologians, and their theological inspiration Franz Overbeck became important for Heidegger at just the time Jonas arrived to apprentice with him. Some forty years later Hans-Georg Gadamer, another of Heidegger's students, would recall Heidegger's enthusiastic reception of Eduard Thurneysen, whose lecture before the Marburg theologians "was for us young people a first missive from the dialectical theology." The early form of *Being and Time* was, Gadamer noted, in fact a lecture delivered in 1924 to the department of theology.[9] In that same year, Bultmann openly repudiated liberal in favor of dialectical theology, a move no doubt noted by Heidegger, a regular participant in Bultmann's seminar.[10] This rare intellectual alliance with Barth at its helm, one that would last for half a decade at best, left its mark on Jonas's thought, but did not determine it. For, without naming him as an interlocutor, Jonas also contested Barth (or Barthian thought), and in ways that set the terms for his confrontation with Heidegger.

This repudiation of Heidegger was first occasioned by Heidegger's infamous rectoral address of 1933. Heidegger had assumed leadership

[7] Hans Jonas, "Philosophische Meditation über Paulus, Römerbrief, Kapitel 7," in *Zeit und Geschichte: Dankesgabe an Rudolf Bultmann zum 80. Geburtstag im Auftrag der Alten Marburger*, ed. Erich Dinkler and Hartwig Thyen (Tübingen: Mohr, 1964), 557–70, here 559, later translated and published as "The Abyss of the Will: Philosophical Meditation on the Seventh Chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans," in Hans Jonas, *Philosophical Essays: From Ancient Creed to Technological Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 335–48.

[8] On Heidegger's reception of Barth and Gogarten, see Charles R. Bambach, *Heidegger, Dilthey, and the Crisis of Historicism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 187–93.

[9] Hans Georg Gadamer, "Martin Heidegger und die Marburger Theologie," in *Zeit und Geschichte*, 479–90, here 480. Gadamer also knew Jonas from his time in Marburg, and had "marveled at his precociousness." Gadamer to Brigitte Uhlemann, April 27, 1998, HJA.

[10] See Rudolf Bultmann, "Die liberale Theologie und die jüngste theologische Bewegung," *Theologische Blätter* 3 (1924): 73–86, and in English, Bultmann, "Liberal Theology and the Latest Theological Movement," in idem, *Faith and Understanding*, ed. Robert W. Funk, trans. Louise Pettibone Smith (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984) 28–52. For a discussion, see James M. Robinson, *The Future of Our Religious Past* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971).

at the university in Freiburg, and as part of the process of *Gleichschaltung* or ideological coordination had thrown in his lot—and evidently the lot of philosophy itself—with the Nazi cause.[11] The move confounded both his students and his colleagues, not least the circle of brilliant Jewish acolytes who had gathered around him. The devotion of his students led Jonas to liken them in retrospect to followers of the Lubavitcher Rebbe—"as if Heidegger was a Tzadik, a miracle-rabbi or a guru"—and in such a light the intensity of disbelief, incredulity, and betrayal is not difficult to fathom:[12]

> The falling into line of the deepest thinker of the time with the thundering lockstep of the brown battalions appeared to me as a catastrophic debacle for philosophy, as a world-historical disgrace, as the bankruptcy of philosophical thought. I held then to the notion that philosophy should guard against something like that.... It could not be. All collaboration, all ideological "coordination"—everywhere one could posit stupidity, blindness, weakness, cowardice as explanations. That the most important, most original philosophical thinker of my time went along, however—that was a monstrous blow for me, not only personally, but in the sense of an event to be taken seriously in the history of philosophy itself.[13]

If Heidegger's decision continues to confound—how after all are we to account for the alliance of the century's most important thinker with its most horrific regime?—it is also in retrospect intelligible.[14] Heidegger's rhetoric of "decision" and "resolve" in the face of terrible anxiety (as elaborated in *Being and Time*, his 1927 masterpiece) could be shoehorned into a Nazi program that in some ways counseled much the same.

This insight and the attack it occasioned first achieved written form in 1952, when Jonas published what remains his most widely-read essay, "Gnosticism and Modern Nihilism."[15] Looking back, Jonas attributed the astonishing fit of the Gnostic phenomenon to Heideggerian categories—a fit that in no small part accounted for the enduring force of his interpretation—to the ways in which Heidegger's existentialism

[11] Martin Heidegger, "Die Selbstbehauptung der deutschen Universität," in idem, *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 16 (Frankfurt: Vittoria Klostermann, 1976), 107–17.

[12] Jonas, *Erinnerungen*, 109.

[13] Ibid., 299–300.

[14] For an interesting attempt to situate the case of Heidegger within the broader question about the fitness of intellectuals for political pursuits, see Mark Lilla, *The Reckless Mind: Intellectuals in Politics* (New York: New York Review of Books, 2001).

[15] Jonas, "Gnosticism and Modern Nihilism," *Social Research* 19 (1952): 452ff., emended and republished as an epilogue to *The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity* (Boston: Beacon, 1958), 320–40.

replicated and radicalized Gnostic nihilism. They shared, so Jonas, in a dualism that set man over and against the world, abetted for them both by God's absence from the scene. Accordingly, accounts of Jonas's philosophical work tend to link his postwar writings in philosophical biology and environmental ethics to this renunciation of Heideggerian and Gnostic nihilism. To overcome Heidegger meant also to overcome Gnosticism.[16]

No doubt this was true, but only in a secondary sense. His attack on Heidegger was in fact not one, but two. Its second iteration exploded on to the world scene in 1964, twelve years after the first. It was then that Jonas addressed a conference of Protestant theologians gathered to honor Heidegger, and revealed to them the face of the pagan obscured by the mask of Heidegger's surface piety. And it was the paganism, not first the nihilism, that Jonas came to identify at the heart of Heidegger's receptivity to the Nazi call. The speech was a sensation. It received prominent coverage in the *New York Times*, provoked a series of lasting disputes, and in Germany earned Jonas the fame reserved for the most celebrated of academic stars. But the attack therein proceeded in curious fashion. It *affirmed* the notions of divine absence and transcendence Jonas had earlier identified and opposed as the core of Gnostic nihilism, and which he associated in his own day with both the theologians of crisis and the natural-scientific spirit. His twofold attack on Heidegger thus reveals a great deal. Jonas must be understood as one who both opposed a dualism that set man over and against the world and as one who hoped to save enough of the dualistic

[16] Despite Heidegger's reputation as an opponent of dualism, as one who pined for an age prior to the split between subject and object, Jonas diagnosed his thought as nevertheless complicitous. Above all, the Heideggerian notion of *Geworfenheit* (thrownness), whose avatar Jonas found in the Gnostics, was thought to smuggle into existentialist thought a dualism of man against world. Whether this occluded Heidegger's insistence that man is always already thrown Jonas declined to address. See Jonas, *Gnostic Religion*, 339. On the equation of *Geworfenheit* with certain Gnostic tenets, see also Hans Jonas, *Erkenntnis und Verantwortung* (Göttingen: Lamuv, 1991), 96. For examples of accounts that describe the attacks on Heidegger and on Gnosticism as battles in a wider war against nihilism, see, in English, Lawrence Vogel, "Hans Jonas's Exodus: From German Existentialism to Post-Holocaust Theology," in Hans Jonas, *Mortality and Morality: A Search for the Good after Auschwitz*, ed. Lawrence Vogel (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 7; and in German, Eric Jakob, *Martin Heidegger und Hans Jonas: Die Metaphysik der Subjektivität und die Krise der technologischen Zivilisation* (Tübingen: Francke, 1996); Franz Josef Wetz, *Hans Jonas zur Einführung* (Hamburg: Junius, 1994); and Wolfgang Baum, *Gnostische Elemente im Denken Martin Heideggers? Eine Studie auf der Grundlage der Religionsphilosophie von Hans Jonas* (Neuried: Ars Una, 1997).

insight to make human life meaningful in the first place. The balance was perforce a delicate one. It was also, in my view, the hallmark of Jonas's philosophical career—and the philosophical expression of his most basic sentiments about human life on this planet. In the pages that follow, I would like to offer an account that discovers the kernel of this stance in an early and fundamental confrontation—not with Heidegger and not with the Gnostics (or not merely with them), but in a Jewish encounter with Paul.

* * * * *

The story begins with *Augustin*. In his book Jonas set out to describe the shift in Augustine's thought provoked by his encounter with the Pelagian heresy. The Pelagians had taken issue with the Pauline insistence on man's sinfulness, the intrinsic concupiscence of his will and its result: that in the act of willing to do good, man sins. Not only, the Pelagians argued, was it possible to adhere to the law, but precisely on that account it was morally required. Jesus did not do away with the law, but brought its completion and a guide to its fulfillment. This of course profoundly challenged Pauline Christianity, since it blunted the enduring force of original sin, and demoted Jesus from savior to prophet. The Pelagians had in effect denied the necessity of Christ's intervention *as* Christ. In theological terms, the controversy centered on the doctrines of original sin and predestination, of which the former, Jonas tells us, was for Augustine by far the more important.[17] Augustine's readings of Paul's Epistle to the Romans—especially its seventh chapter, in which Paul distinguished most forcefully between flesh and spirit, law and grace—served Jonas as prooftexts. Not coincidentally, this chapter elicited some of the most explosive rhetoric in Barth's commentary also: no coincidence, in part, because Paul does no less in this chapter than elaborate a philosophical anthropology predicated on the unresolvable antinomies of law as such—at least as Jonas was to see it.

The essay begins with a juxtaposition: the Stoic notion of freedom set against its Christian equivalent. The Stoics, Jonas argued, equated freedom with independence and self-sufficiency. The self was thought to both erect a sphere and restrict itself to it. The borders of this region doubled as the borders of the self's freedom. What lurks beyond—the "not-I, the foreign" or *das Fremde*—restricts the self, "not coincidentally

[17] Jonas, *Augustin*, 7.

or occasionally, but essentially." Freedom for the Stoic self therefore consists of self-restriction to its "most-own." Yet for the Christian, the problem of freedom begins precisely there. Like the Stoic, the Christian finds salvation in a turn away from the world, if in a different way. For the Stoic, the world unsettles. For the Christian, that disquiet merely distracts the self from its true and deeper distress. To wallow in worldly sorrow, to worry, as does the Stoic, about his status over and against the world, is for the Christian a flight, an obstacle to his "naked disclosure before God." Freedom for the stoic is bound to willfulness over and against the world; for the Christian, freedom involves the "freedom of the will over and against itself, that is, over and against its own mode of being as *concupiscentia* and *superbia*." Whereas for the Stoic the will serves as an instrument of self-assertion, it functions for the Christian as a kind of prison, one, moreover, in which sin abounds. There where the Christian can only be a subject, where only the Christian's will and nothing else is concerned, he suffers his most essential powerlessness. Not even the will toward authenticity and sufficiency before God remains unsullied. In its most general terms, the Christian problem of freedom might then be posed as a series of questions: "How do freedom and necessary sinfulness, or alternatively, the necessary failure of man, relate?... How can man be both incapable and responsible? Is the necessity of sin a natural compulsion (coactio) or does it emerge from the will, left to itself, as its own act? If the latter, then why can the will not just as easily will to do good? And if the former, then how might God be considered just?"[18] These are the questions Jonas would seek to answer in a variety of forms, only apparently unrelated, throughout the course of his life.

For Augustine—so Jonas—these questions came to a head in Romans 7:7–25, a rich but difficult passage that describes the relation of the state of law to the state of grace.[19] Prior to the Pelagian challenge, Augustine

[18] Ibid., 9, 12, 13, 17.

[19] "What then shall we say? That the law is sin? God forbid. Yet, if it had not been for the law, I should not have known sin. I should not have known covetousness, had the law not said 'thou shalt not covet.' But sin, receiving impulse from the commandment, wrought in me all kind of covetousness. For without the law sin is dead, and I once lived without the law: but with the advent of the commandment sin came alive, and I died, and the very commandment given for life proved to be death to me. For sin, taking impulse from the commandment, tricked me and through the commandment killed me. Now the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good: did, then, what is good bring death to me? By no means! Rather it was sin, so that it might come to light as sin, which wrought death in me through the good, so that sin through

most often accounted for the sinfulness of law with what Jonas derided as the "forbidden candy" thesis: that which is taboo entices, that which is prohibited tempts. Jonas irritably relegated this sort of thinking to the realm of child and mass psychology, irrelevant to the question at hand. Augustine's other texts, however, provided grist for an alternative account easily integrated with Augustine's commentary on Paul. On this view, vanity manages to transform or falsify the willful act from within, for it converts an ethical obedience of the law into its opposite. This failure is no coincidence: it is in fact intrinsic to Augustinian man, as the purity of will tends to decay into *amor sui*, or love of self. This phenomenon itself reflects the more fundamental ambivalence of the will abandoned entirely to itself. Augustine, so Jonas, abandoned precisely this dialectic in his post-Pelagian account.[20]

On this new account, in the dialectic of willing and incapacity, the latter has finally triumphed. *Homo sub lege* is divested of all capacity to will or do good. His freedom now consists only in the *delectatio peccati*, the lust for the sinful. No longer does Augustine speak of a serious fight against temptation. As man is emasculated and the sphere of his capacity abridged, grace becomes all the more crucial, and the borders within which it operates expand. This move served Augustine well in his battle with the Pelagians, who contested man's principal insufficiency, and thought of grace as taught and attained rather than merely granted. Though still inferior, because heteronomous, the old law became figured as a stage and an impulse toward grace, understood by the Pelagians as the "full, autonomous sufficiency of man."[21] As men *already* moving

the very commandment might become sinful beyond measure. For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For my own actions are beyond my ken: for not that which I will am I doing, but what I hate, this I perform. Now if I perform that which I do not will, then I consent to the law and own that it is good. But by that token it is not I any more who acts but the sin which dwells within me. For I know that within me, that is, in my flesh, there dwells no good. For willing what is right is in my power, but doing it is not. For I do not perform the good which I will, but the evil I will not, that I do [verse 20 omitted] so I find in me, who wills to do right, a law by which evil lies close at hand. For I delight in the law of God with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin which dwells in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I of myself serve the law of God with the mind, but the law of sin with the flesh." I have translated this passage very literally, in order to replicate the complex nature of Paul's argument.

[20] Jonas, *Augustin*, 26–29.

[21] Ibid., 36, 42. It was for this reason that Jonas found in the Pelagians the religious origins of the idea of progress, a notion seconded, to an extent, by Hans Blumenberg in *Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, trans. Robert M. Wallace (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1983), 54.

toward grace, the Pelagians could ignore those passages of Romans that were for Augustine most crucial. In response, Augustine severed, completely and absolutely, the state of grace from the state of law. Where the Pelagians found law and grace on a continuum, and where the early Augustine could at least imagine their imbrication, the later Augustine imagined them as separate realms altogether. From this last perspective, the Pelagians inhabited a space that simply could not be, suspended somewhere between the two.

Augustine's scramble to protect grace from impurity Jonas thought an abject failure. The Augustinian strategy works only so long as man under grace need not describe his condition with reference to his debased predecessor. Wittingly or not, he otherwise acknowledges a deeper ground upon which their differences might be charted, a modicum of identity that denies the incommensurability upon which the state of grace had first been predicated. For Jonas, the pertinent passages in Paul's epistle referred obviously to the status of man under law—articulated, however, from the standpoint of man under grace. The passage "does not concern two different men, categories of men, phases of development, or historical epochs, but essentially a single existence: as soon as the man under grace wishes to speak of himself as man, of his human situation, he can see himself only *sub lege*." The state of grace thus loses the essential autonomy which Augustine hoped to grant it. It is instead the "current cancellation of the state of law." Here, for Jonas, was the rub: the Pauline epistle both required and made it "unthinkable" that grace might be freed from the demands of law, independent that is, "from that which man quite simply is before God." On the contrary: any account of grace inevitably "consists in admitting one's actual imprisonment under the law," as grace is literally constituted through its "dark and secret underground" and "primordial condition," the state of law to which it remains dialectically bound.[22] Confronted with the Pelagian threat, Augustine had rent this dialectic asunder—for Jonas an indivisible "existential unity"—and hypostatized its moods into separate realms of experience, its stages into unrelated moments in time.

Such speculation may at first appear far removed from its interwar context. But it spoke to some of the burning existential questions of the day. Not by chance had Barth explored this issue at length in his own

[22] Jonas, *Augustin*, 48–49.

commentary on Paul. Barth described the relation of sin to grace as one of non-logical difference, as a relationless relation. "Sin and grace," he wrote, "cannot be placed side by side, or arranged in series, or treated as of like importance, any more than death and life can be so treated. There is no bridge across the gulf that separates them. They have no blurred edges which might be run together."[23] That the recognition of this cleft eludes most of those who inhabit the dim world of men does nothing to alter its fact. Barth imagined grace as a realm of purity beyond purity, in which law and grace cease to function as intelligible words. Or as one of his contemporaries put it in aptly Nietzschean terms, "the Christian negates *Kultur*, negates the world, he is beyond good and evil."[24] If available only to a select few on this side of the divide, Barth's gnosis seems wholly unavailable to those on the other, at least not as a gnosis recognizable as such. "Standing in the shadow of *the law*," he wrote, the Christian "looks back upon *the law* and its dialectic as that which is done away." That is to say, only under the shadow of law might one imagine the state of its utter negation. Grace was for him a "realm where there is no law."[25]

All this would seem to reveal Barth as an antinomian in its most resolute and obstinate guise. His own words give ample warrant for thinking so. Consider: "The law—sin? It seems obvious that we are almost compelled to the judgment that the law is sin." Or: "How enticing to us some semi-antinomianism, or indeed, complete antinomianism!" Or again: "Why should we not enroll ourselves as disciples of Marcion, and proclaim a new God, quite distinct from the old God of the law?" Alternatively, and for Barth this amounted to the same, one might dissolve law into the immanence of the world, and "set forth the secret of a true supernatural religion running at all points parallel to natural religion." Others in his time, preeminently the champions of Spinoza, appeared to do precisely that. Yet all these Barth repudiated as illusory. Why? "The answer," he wrote, citing Paul, "is simply—God forbid!"[26]

[23] Karl Barth, *Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Edwyn Hoskins (London: Oxford University Press, 1933), 228.

[24] Karl Ludwig Schmidt, "Marcion und wir," in *Adolf von Harnack zum 70. Geburtstag* (Leipzig: J.C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1921), 3–40, here 36.

[25] Barth, *Romans*, 237, 250.

[26] Ibid., 241, 255.

Paul's words notwithstanding, the answer was in fact not so simple. To an antinomian position and to Marcionite theology, too, Barth could not in the end grant his blessing. Both he considered false alternatives, "pseudo-radicalism," for both were born and remained of this world. Neither one accorded the state of grace its incommensurability. Writing of "religion," Barth insisted "there can be no question of our escaping from this final thing, ridding ourselves of it, or putting something else in its place. It follows also that we cannot just identify law and sin, or suppose that we can advance out of the realm of sin into the realm of grace simply by some complete or partial abrogation of the law."[27] On Barth's logic, escape remained impossible "as long as a man liveth," which is to say, as long as man lives as man under law, and not as quasi-divine under grace, as long as man remains confined to his human possibilities and excluded from his godly ones.

For all his disavowals, however, Barth clearly belonged in the antinomian camp. That man as man might not authentically adopt such a position speaks not to the defects of the antinomian stance, but to the conviction that human *will* might have no part in authentic being whatsoever. Following Paul, Barth designated the willfulness of willing, even a will to grace, as sinful. As Heidegger was to do, Barth counseled resolve in the face of man's impossible position. "At whatever cost," he wrote, "we must remain at our post and drain the cup to its dregs.... We must submit to the full paradox of our situation." This situation he described as a "condition of shattering confusion" from which man might never escape.[28] Curiously, though, Barth did not comment on the willfulness implicit in such resolution. Logically, his position should have led to a kind of withdrawal or *ataraxia*, a calm disavowal of human initiative regarding ultimate things and a wait for the arrival of grace from the realm of the transcendent. But this it did not do.

Paul and the Gnostics (both ancient and modern) had for various reasons come to denigrate the world and posited some other-worldly realm of escape. They located true freedom elsewhere, often in death metaphorically construed. So, for example, Barth: "Through the slain body of Christ, we are what we are not. Observed from this scene of death 'we' live no more; we are dead to the law, dead to the possibility and necessity of religion, dead to every human possibility; we are

[27] Ibid., 242.

[28] Ibid., 85, 255.

removed, set free, unfettered."[29] The Gnostics, too, had privileged what Jonas called an *erlösende Vernichtung*, a redeeming annihilation.[30] They, too, felt compelled to denigrate what Barth, following Paul, called the flesh, understood as "unqualified, and finally unqualifiable worldliness." Since for Barth "the passions of sin spring ultimately from the 'vitality of mortality,' their vigorous energy can—apart from the final word 'Resurrection'—produce only—fruit unto death."[31]

All of this Jonas came flatly to repudiate. While Barth found freedom in metaphorical death, Jonas would locate it in the phenomenon of life. This, not incidentally, was the title of his first book to follow *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*. There he developed a philosophy of the organism that could hardly oppose the Pauline denigration of the flesh in terms any more emphatic than it did. The guiding impulse of his philosophical biology, to revalue the world in the face of the absent God and to reinsert man into the continuum of biological life, turned both Gnostic and Pauline theology on its head. Barth bemoaned human vitality, which after all had its origins in man's fall. Jonas evinced none of this nostalgia for prelapsarian grace and discovered in flesh the source of freedom, human and otherwise. Barth's antinomianism was underwritten by an association of slavery to the law with a "psycho-physical occurrence."[32] His hostility to human as opposed to godly life he conflated with his hostility to law, and located in the human body their shared origin. Meanwhile, Jonas came to find freedom, not servitude, in the very fact of metabolism, in the unconscious, cellular, all-pervading *willfulness* of the organism. At times, Jonas pushed the threshold of freedom even further back, and claimed to hear its dim echoes in the muted call of the inorganic. The mystery of origins may remain ultimately closed, he admitted, but that could not dissuade him from his preferred hypothesis: "that even the transition from inanimate to animate substance, the first feat of matter's organizing itself for life, was actuated by a tendency in the depth of being toward the very modes of freedom to which this transition opened the gate."[33] Whereas Barth erected entirely distinct realms for transcendence and immanence, for the divine and the worldly,

[29] Ibid., 234.
[30] Jonas, "Das geistesgeschichtliche Milieu," Hans-Jonas-Archiv (HJA) 10–21–2, 15.
[31] Barth, *Romans*, 235, 263.
[32] Ibid., 244.
[33] Hans Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life: Toward a Philosophical Biology* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), 4.

Jonas thought even the lowliest amoeba endowed with the horizons of both. His philosophical biology, it should now be clear, developed in important ways out of an early encounter with Paul.

The traces of this encounter are preserved for us—in his letter of 1929 to Bultmann and in the essay of 1964 in which the letter was reproduced. Before considering it in detail, however, it may help to situate the letter and the concerns it addressed chronologically in the development of Jonas's thought. The publication history of Jonas's work—*Augustin* in 1930, *Gnosis* in 1934—hardly corresponds to the order in which Jonas actually conceived and executed them. Though the Augustine text had its origins in a 1924 seminar, its reworking for publication accompanied the most crucial aspects of the Gnosticism project, namely, the dissertation on *Der Begriff der Gnosis* completed in 1930. The reworking of the Augustine text and the letter to Bultmann on Paul thus appear just as Jonas reached his crucial breakthrough in the interpretation of Gnosticism.

We would do well, therefore, not to dispatch them to the collective trash-heap of philosophical *Jugendschriften*. Jonas identified his analysis of Paul as the foundation of the *Gnosis* project, referring to it as the "kernel of the whole," the "normative position" and the "rare high point" of the Gnostic *Daseinshaltung*. Paul was thought to "cast light on all other cases" and to allow for an "understanding of all the appearances in the entire [Gnostic] realm." The Pauline epistle contained the "most original and unclouded" statements of the Gnostic spirit. Even when left unspecified, Jonas instructed the reader to assume Paul's presence in the explication of every last detail of the Gnostic phenomenon.[34] This because, as he put it elsewhere, Paul was no less than the "*locus classicus*" for the Gnostic mode of thought.[35]

In his correspondence with Bultmann, Jonas outlined a "structural" analysis of the Pauline idea of man. He wrote of Paul as a philosophical anthropologist whose touchstone was the notion of primal sin "inevitably committed and constantly renewed."[36] Jonas hoped to "prove" here what remained an operative assumption in his essay on Augustine, that the statements of Romans 7 referred not to Paul the

[34] The surviving extract is called "Methodologische Einleitung: Zur Hermeneutik religiöser Phänomene," HJA 13–16–1, 4, 5, 15, 16. Its continuation is HJA 3–11–1.
[35] As he wrote in the first chapter of his dissertation, called "Das geistesgeschichtliche Milieu," 15ff.
[36] Jonas, "The Abyss of the Will," 337.

person, not to a psychological type, and not to any notion of historical mankind that must pass through temporally successive stages from law to grace. They referred, rather, to man as such. Only so could they have comprised an argument for the Christian alternative to Judaism and paganism. Bereft of chance and accident, Romans spoke the universal and necessary.

Jonas began his analysis by locating in the will a process of reflection isomorphic to one in the realm of thought. Just as thinking is at the same time an "I think that I think" or *cogito me cogitare*, so, too, is willing an "I will that I will," or a *volo me velle*. Yet the two are distinct, keenly so. In the realm of willing, not thought, takes place the reflexive process constitutive of freedom (understood in Heidegger's terms as a "continuously operative *decision about itself*"). Jonas in fact used the terms—willing and freedom—as virtual synonyms. In the realm of thought, by contrast, takes place a process of objectification, both of other and self, that is self-conscious in a way *volo me velle* is not. This distinction is crucial, for it enabled Jonas to describe the transformation of *volo me velle* into a *cogito me velle* (an "I think that I will") as freedom's self-abdication and dispossession: "instead of living within the execution of its self-chosen action, [freedom] looks at it from without as its own observer and so has already become a stranger to it—has at bottom forsaken and betrayed it." In other words, the action living unconditionally in the act itself—theologically, the primal fusion with the divine, and allegorically, life in Eden—has come to be displaced by a self that observes itself as an actor. We might say that freedom here finds itself in the position of Adam, suddenly conscious and ashamed of his nakedness. This switch from *volo me velle* to *cogito me velle* Jonas called the "trap in the Law," a trap "not only consistent with its holiness but even directly caused by it, since the Law as such enjoins self-consciousness." That is to say, law elicits the will's self-objectification. "As the Law through its Ought first makes freedom reflective and thereby morality possible, so through its compulsion to self-scrutiny it creates at the same time the condition for the plight of subjectivity," and more to the point, the condition for "the perversion of purpose."[37] This is the case whether one has in mind heteronomous, Pauline law or autonomous, Kantian law. Utilitarian calculations of reward and punishment in the former and vanity in the latter dirty the will's strivings toward holiness, or

[37] Ibid., 340, 341, 345.

in the Kantian scheme, toward dutifulness. The dialectic ruling here stands beyond the distinction between autonomy and heteronomy; it speaks the lexicon of authenticity.[38]

The story does not end with law, however, for law is impotent absent its recognition, and more fundamentally, absent man's capacity to know. As Jonas understood it, knowing itself was born of the "primal objectification of the world and the split between self and world that goes with it," a split which generates both freedom as well as its "inescapable snare." Theologically, then, knowing had its genesis in the fall from grace; allegorically, in the eating of the apple. Thereafter, man might well resist the "spiritual sweetness of sin." Forbidden candy cannot, after all, compel one to eat it. It has no unavoidable logic. But the snares internal to freedom elicited by the capacity to know prove inescapable. This is because

[38] In this, Jonas departed from a fairly common move at the time; that is, to adopt Paul as a vehicle for antagonism toward Kant. Barth, for example, turned to Paul as a way to divest himself of his earlier neo-Kantianism, which he imbibed at Marburg from its foremost exponent, Hermann Cohen (Barth's relation to Cohen and to Kant was in fact far more complex than such formulaic terms suggest). In the law's domain, especially, this move seemed to have warrant. Kant thought law attainable through the conscious exercise of one's reason; Paul thought it known through revelation. Kant privileged an autonomous notion of law, Paul a heteronomous one. Kant thought adherence to the law allowed for the transcendence of our natural selves, for the habitation of the supernatural and intelligible world as opposed to the merely sensible one. Paul thought law worked quite simply to slay the soul. In sum, Kant could associate law with freedom, Paul only with slavery (although both thought of Old Testament law as heteronomous and enslaving). Besides Barth and the crisis theologians, no less than the son of the great neo-Kantian Ernst Cassirer looked to Paul as a way to get beyond the antinomies of Kantian moral philosophy. Reared as a Jewish neo-Kantian, Heinz Cassirer found Paul at age fifty, and had himself baptized shortly thereafter. Cassirer's case helps to throw into relief both a more expansive logic as well as the particular stance taken up by Jonas. They were of the same generation, born in 1903, and both repudiated the neo-Kantian position in many of its forms. Where Cassirer could content himself with the Pauline position, however, Jonas could not, and for the same reason. The fundamental oppositions of Kantian and Pauline law notwithstanding, they did share a deep pessimism about man as a natural creature. Paul called the flesh and all that was associated with it his enemy; Kant distrusted human inclinations and feelings rooted in the impulse toward personal happiness. This shared conviction made the transition from Kant to Paul palatable for Cassirer, who could recall no period in his life when he "was not firmly persuaded that man was naturally evil." For Jonas, it disqualified them both as sources for ethical thought. In formulaic terms, we might say that Jonas repudiated both Kant and Paul in favor of a reworked philosophy of natural man, even as his ethics would later claim as its measure a naturalized categorical imperative. Heinz W. Cassirer, *Grace and Law: St. Paul, Kant, and the Hebrew Prophets* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 15.

> freedom, even when successful in abstaining from unethical outward "work," encounters in the own most sphere of its self-grounding this inward possibility of itself which always lies in wait and claims its mental enactment; and the fact that here, within the mind, the mere thought is the act, and the possibility to think it is necessity to think it, and willing not to think it means to have already thought it, and not-having-thought-it may be concealing it, and concealing it may be its most suspicious presence: this labyrinthine structure of subjectivity *per se* makes the self-temptation irresistible to freedom in its helpless dealing with itself. Prior to any explicit counter-resolve, even in the heart of any counter-exertion itself, it has already succumbed to it in some subtle way.

Jonas here expressed in phenomenological terms the sort of dynamic he recognized in Augustine's failed attempts to separate law from grace. For them both, "the attempt at holiness of will condemns itself to an unholy will."[39]

But there the matter does not rest, Jonas argued, for freedom is not so easily duped. "It is on guard against its own tricks and keeps its eyes open." The will recognizes what has happened, attempts to "catch up with its own objectivization," and, when successful, restores on another level its lost authenticity. This move has a temporal correlate, since the "representational present" of objectification becomes "re-dissolved into the flow of the volitional," and hence willful, "future." This new stage of the will's primal reflection, of its *volo me velle*, has about it, however, no more permanence than its original: it, too, lapses into the objectification of the *cogito*, and "so there ensues a ceaseless, self-mirroring back-and-forth, an elusive but highly real dialectic which is not even separable into successive parts."[40] Earlier, Jonas had faulted Augustine for dispossessing the Pauline dialectic of its terror by situating its poles in time and in space. Jonas would do no such thing.

It may help to pause for a moment and consider the extent to which this story of the will coheres with Barth's. To sum up, the will falls from a realm of purest willing into the realm of thought. Whether it does so of its own accord or at the instigation of the law remains unclear: Jonas insisted on both, with the proviso that law in the highest sense "means nothing heteronomous but precisely freedom's demand upon itself." In any case, the fall from authenticity provokes the effort to reinstate it, which in turn ensures its repeated fall. The result: an

[39] Jonas, "The Abyss of the Will," 342, 345.
[40] Ibid., 341.

incessant and ahistorical dialectic of freedom and its abdication, of the striving toward holiness and its inevitable collapse, a dialectic that might be interrupted only from "somewhere else." About this last possibility, Jonas wrote, "philosophy has nothing to say."[41] Or as he put it in an early draft of *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*: "An 'abrogation' of this purely human process and its true suspension can, given its nature, legitimately proceed only from God."[42] As Jonas saw it, this was the lot which Paul had left to pharisaic man.

Barth told a similar story. He did not speak of the fall of the will; he spoke of the fall of man. But an end to the primal fusion that exiled human from divine, the capacity to know and distinguish, and above all, a destructive form of self-consciousness were hallmarks of both. Both the Pauline will and Barthian man found themselves doubly condemned as well: condemned to try and reinstate authenticity, and to fail, over and over again. Only outside intervention might bring an end to this compulsion to repeat, and for Barth, this referred quite clearly to the incursion of the transcendent and unknown divine, to the loving extension of grace.[43]

[41] Ibid.
[42] Jonas, "Zur Hermeneutik religiöser Phänomene," 29. HJA 3–11–1.
[43] One might surmise that their similarities derive not from any deep affinity or influence or borrowing, but from the simple fact that Barth and Jonas direct their exegetical energies to the same set of passages. It is therefore important to point out that this anthropological reading of Paul was not—and is not—the only possible one, nor the only one available at the time. Here, a few examples will have to suffice. Gottlieb Klein's *Studien über Paulus* (1918) understood Romans to refer to historically specific periods in Paul's own life. Romans was reduced to autobiography, the conversion experience to psychology. (Of additional interest is the analogy Klein drew between Paul and the figure of Acher. See Gottlieb Klein, *Studien über Paulus* [Stockholm: Albert Bonniers, 1918], 29–33.) Max Wertheimer had little use for Paul, anthropological or otherwise; his aim was to deny the actuality of Paul as a historical figure altogether; see Max Wertheimer, *Das Mysteriumjudentum und der Heidenapostel Saulus-Paulus* (Vienna: R. Löwit, 1928). Hans-Joachim Schoeps specifically disavowed the anthropological reading of Paul some time after Jonas, and this despite the considerable influence exerted upon him by Barth's theology. Schoeps associated the anthropological move in the history of religions with Heidegger, and bemoaned what he called the "Heideggerization" of the discipline. See Hans-Joachim Schoeps, *Urgemeinde, Judenchristentum, Gnosis* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1956), 35. For a critique of Schoeps's reception of Barth, see Gershom Scholem's important letter, "Offener Brief an den Verfasser der Schrift 'Jüdischer Glaube in dieser Zeit,'" *Bayerische Israelitische Gemeindezeitung* 8 (August 15, 1932): 241–44. Schoeps considered Scholem his most astute critic; see Hans-Joachim Schoeps, *Rückblicke: Die letzten 30 Jahre (1925–1955) und danach* (Berlin: Haude & Spener, 1963), 73. On the scholarly stage, then, the philosophical anthropologist was one of Paul's more infrequent roles. But only until Jonas: three years later, in 1932, Bultmann would publish his own interpretation of Romans 7, and in the terms of philosophical anthropology.

If in Paul's world *homo pharisaius* predominated, he can hardly be said to have reigned. All in all, as Jonas described him, he was a miserable, pitiful creature. Constitutionally deficient, unable to fulfill the demands of God, the law, or even his own, he could do little more than skulk through life aware of the fact, and wait for a grace that might well never come. How, Jonas thought, he must have wished to abandon Paul's world for that of his teacher, Jesus. The difference between them was no less than their anthropological premise. While Jesus exposed a wanting form of lawful piety, Paul denied its very possibility. While Jesus attacked from within a "false and corrigible attitude," Paul described from without a "true and unavoidable experience." For Jesus, *pharisaius* was an inferior, but empirical type among others. For Paul, his was "the ultimate position before grace" and his defeat the "defeat of man as such."[44]

In sum, Jesus had not "summoned away from the law," but called from its superficial to its serious compliance, from letter to spirit. "Where that call leads, there the real experience of the Law waits." Thus corrected, however, pharisaic man would only then find himself in the Pauline predicament, "still unredeemed but aware of it." He would find himself in the Barthian situation, in which knowledge of God's absence counts as man's matchless triumph. "Existential self-knowledge belongs to the complete wholeness of the Pharisee," Jonas wrote.[45] Only the man made aware of his incapacity and led to despair by law's demand finds himself primed for the reception of grace. For all its hostility to law, Paul's scheme cannot do without it, and it is here that he helps us see the conservative (or nomocentric) moment in the consistently antinomian position.

In 1964, in published form, Jonas was content to end the analysis there. In 1929, in a more private medium, he was not. In the letter to Bultmann, he adverted in conclusion for the only time to the first person voice, and offered "an entirely personal argument, but for myself the decisive one." "As a Jew," he wrote, "I feel myself attacked by Jesus' critique not essentially, but only in a particular expression of Jewish

See Rudolf Bultmann, "Römer 7 und die Anthropologie des Paulus," in *Imago Dei. Beiträge zur theologischen Anthropologie. Gustav Krüger zum siebzigsten Geburtstag am 29. Juni 1932 dargebracht*, ed. Heinrich Bornkamm (Gießen: Töpelmann, 1932), 53–62, here 57ff. Others would pick up on his lead. See, for example, Günther Bornkamm, *Das Ende des Gesetzes: Paulusstudien* (Munich: C. Kaiser, 1952), 51–69.

[44] Jonas, "The Abyss of the Will," 346–48.

[45] Ibid.

piety. By Paul, however, I feel myself essentially and basically struck, so that neither as a Jew nor a man would I have something to defend myself against [him]."[46]

Jonas might have substituted Barth's name in this announcement for Paul's—and with some justice. As we have seen, Jonas's story of the will replicated in Heideggerian terms much of Barth's commentary on Paul's epistle. The similarities do not, however, end there. In his adieu to Bultmann, Jonas declared Paul guilty of the deepest metaphysical anti-Semitism. By attacking lawful piety as such, Paul had in effect made impossible any sort of authentic, Jewish being-in-the-world. Barth did likewise. "The 'peculiarity' of the Jew," he wrote, "is occasioned by his occupation of a position so perilously near the edge of a precipice that its sheer drop may be taken as bearing witness to the sharp edge of that wholly other precipice, by which all human achievements, all concrete occurrences, are bounded; the precipice which separates men from God."[47] Here Barth seemed to translate into anti-liberal theology the sort of anti-Semitism that marred the liberal thought of a theologian such as Harnack. Though Harnack may have thought Jews impudent for their stubborn refusal to integrate into the universalist liberal state, he could at least envision a historical resolution to the problem.[48] Barth repudiated both liberalism and the liberal solution to the "Jewish problem." Accordingly, he reiterated (albeit in modified form) an old Christian argument that *requires* a continued Jewish presence in the world, if only as a reminder of Jewish abjection and of the rightness of the new dispensation. In Barth's scheme Jewish peculiarity continued to "bear witness": no longer to the obvious rectitude of normative Christianity, but to a lack of relation between man and God more akin to Marcionite doctrine. Where the former scheme contested Jewish belief in Israel's chosenness, the latter extended the Christian retraction of providence from Israel to man as such, and adduced the status of the Jew as its proof.

It is here, occulted and occluded, that the "Jewish" sources of the Jonasian critique are disclosed. Scare quotes seem required, first, to recall the general permeability of the category, and second, to indicate the

[46] HJA 3–11–2.

[47] Barth, *Romans*, 245.

[48] At the turn of the century, Harnack published to wild acclaim a series of lectures, *Das Wesen des Christentums* (1901). Though not its guiding impulse, the lectures took aim in part at the Jewish refusal to disappear into the wider social body.

quality of that porousness in this case: the link Jonas forged between authentic Jewish being and authentic human being. "Neither as a Jew nor a man" did Jonas have something to say to Paul. At least this was the case insofar as a response need be couched in Pauline terms. For Jonas did indeed have something to say, and he said it by disavowing the Pauline view altogether, first in the form of a philosophical biology and later in a naturalized ethics. That is to say, he took issue with Paul's hostility to the flesh and to the law, which on Barth's account were one and the same. His analysis of Paul may now appear as that which it is: the prism through which the early, theological projects became refracted into his later ones.

It also set the terms for his confrontation with Heidegger. The Pauline mode of thought Jonas associated deeply with that of his teacher. He did not consider them equivalents. But he imagined that the forced encounter of Heidegger with Paul in the elemental conditions of his hermeneutic crucible disclosed the true meanings of both.[49] Jonas would later use similar terms to describe his Heideggerian reading of the Gnostics. In his 1952 essay, "Gnosticism, Existentialism, and Nihilism," he wrote of the reversal and reciprocity of the hermeneutic functions. "Lock turns into key and key into lock; the 'existentialist' reading of Gnosticism, so well vindicated by its hermeneutic success, invites as its natural complement the trial of a 'Gnostic' reading of Existentialism."[50] By most accounts, this very phrase marks the point at which Jonas turned (philosophically) on the master from Germany, the moment he linked Gnostic to Heideggerian nihilism in order to reject them both. This turn can now be seen to have had its origins—its precedent really—in a time even before Heidegger declared his allegiance to the Nazi cause. As Jonas turned on Paul, so, too, did he sow the seeds for the turn on his teacher.

These seeds took root and first flowered in 1952. But in the speech that brought worldwide attention to the fact and extent of Heidegger's Nazism, those same flowers threatened to wither, and at Jonas's hand no less. In 1964 Jonas delivered an address to a group of Christian theologians gathered at Drew University to discuss "Non-Objectifying Thinking and Speaking in Contemporary Theology." To the layman, the title must have promised little. But to those gathered it referred

[49] HJA 13–16–1, 14.
[50] Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, 321.

to the attempt of recent Protestant theology to adapt for its own use Heidegger's later philosophy. Theologians had long sought a way around the thorny problem of objectification—in their case, speech or thought that threatened to make an object of God, calculable, knowable, available for human manipulation—in other words, an object of what could only be the subject of subjects. Precisely this issue had fueled the theologizing of Barth & Co. God ought not be reduced to an object of cognition.[51] The problem also lay at the heart of demythologization, the procedure which Jonas and Bultmann developed as a means to approach the "primal" and "existential" core of the religious phenomenon obscured by the mythological language in which it was clothed. Some of Heidegger's later work promised a way beyond this series of problems, and Heinrich Ott, Barth's successor at Basel, convened a group of Heidegger's theological admirers to ask whether and how.[52]

These theologians hoped to discover in Heidegger—paragon of the "most recent and modish" trends in philosophy—a language adequate to the task of theology. "So as it once had been with Hegel," Jonas later recalled, "so it should now be with Heidegger."[53] Though scheduled to deliver the keynote address, Heidegger bowed out on account of illness. The conference organizers invited Jonas to step to the fore, under the impression that they could expect of this one-time pupil of both Heidegger and Bultmann an affirmation of the gathering's guiding postulate. They could hardly have expected what was to come. "It was one of the few times in which admittedly I was not altogether upstanding," Jonas later remarked, for he did nothing upon accepting the invitation to dispel their false impressions. Instead, he thought to himself: "This is my hour, the moment of reckoning." The expectations of Heidegger's theological admirers, above all those from Germany and Switzerland, were turned on their head. It was a "sensation," as Jonas recalled it, "and a Heidegger-disaster."[54]

[51] For an approving discussion by a contemporary, see Rudolf Bultmann's commentary in "Liberal Theology."
[52] Translations of Heidegger's contributions to the conference appear in *The Religious*, ed. John D. Caputo (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002). For Ott's own position on the issue, see *Denken und Sein: Der Weg Martin Heideggers und der Weg der Theologie* (Zollikon: Evangelischer Verlag, 1959).
[53] Jonas, *Erinnerungen*, 305.
[54] Ibid., 304.

Jonas admonished his theological friends against a too-ready assimilation of Heidegger's philosophy. Heidegger's position of piety over and against human self-assertion seemed to accord nicely with Christian tenets, he admitted. But their apparent affinity worked only to mask all the better Heidegger's paganism, the thoroughgoing immanence of his scheme. At times, Jonas sounded a downright Barthian note in his attack: "The being whose fate Heidegger ponders is the quintessence of this world," he argued. "It is *saeculum*. Against this, theology should guard the radical transcendence of its God, whose voice comes not out of being but breaks into the kingdom of being from without." The similarity Being's self-unveiling shared with Christian revelation Jonas dismissed as superficial. The revelation in Heidegger's scheme originated not in the beyond but in the immanent realm of being-in-the-world. "Quite consistently do the gods appear again in Heidegger's philosophy," he observed. "But where the gods are, God cannot be."[55] To rescue divine transcendence from oblivion, Jonas could deploy Barth against Heidegger; in so doing, however, he courted the loss of the world, and in the midst of a broader project whose intent was to save it.

The sensibility associated with the theologians of crisis surfaced in this essay in other capacities also. Jonas echoed, for example, Barth's critique of Schleiermacher, warning against the anthropomorphic impulse that would make of God a projection of man. The persistence of the Barthian motif makes more sense, perhaps, when we consider that Jonas's attack on Heidegger appeared in the same year as the (reworked) essay on Paul. But, Jonas now affirmed aspects of an approach to theology he had earlier assailed, and as a means to save Heidegger's theological champions from themselves. His inquiries into Paul enabled him to point to the limits of Heideggerian phenomenology, and to inoculate Heidegger's would-be epigones against a fatal contagion. The domain of the existential concept, he pointed out, extends only to the "self-experience of man '*before*' God, *coram deo*, not *in* God, or: *homo sub lege*, not *homo sub gratia*."[56] "Where the divine itself is said to enter," he argued, "phenomenology ceases to have a say."[57] On this

[55] Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 248.

[56] Though he did not acknowledge it, Jonas here reproduced almost verbatim a passage from his dissertation. Jonas, "Methodologische Einleitung," 28. HJA 13–11–1.

[57] Phenomenology could at best be the science of pharisaic man, notwithstanding the claim of its founder, Edmund Husserl, that "If we encounter [God] as a datum in consciousness, then we will certainly describe him."

Jonas insisted, despite some of Heidegger's recent statements to the contrary; to wit, that his thought brought into an uneasy dependence philosophy and theology, Being and God.[58]

Jonas had in fact developed two critiques of Heidegger, even if he did not specify them as such. He opposed the early Heidegger and the formalist, decisionist ethics of *Being and Time*. He also opposed the later "theological" and oracular Heidegger, against whom he adduced Barthian arguments, and in so doing came perilously close to reversing his earlier position. The early Heidegger Jonas found objectionable because he offered no ground for the content of decision, only the imperative to decide. This meant trouble for ethics. But to contest this position did not demand a partial rescue of Barth. The recovery of Barth was made necessary only when Heidegger's so-called paganism became the source of his ire. The early Heidegger had elaborated an imperative to decide, the later Heidegger a counsel to wait and listen. But neither had offered a means by which to distinguish—between decisions on the one hand, between calls on the other. The self-same piety over and against human self-assertion that made Heidegger attractive to this latest generation of Protestant theologians now made him deeply suspect—because whatever its seductions to those (like Jonas) who counseled against an unbounded sense of human prerogative, it masked a failing deeper still. Heidegger had once heeded his own imperative to decide. He decided for fascism. Jonas worried that Heidegger's more recent approach was still worse. Under the guise of piety he had eschewed "decisionism" but had done away with a standard by which to distinguish between calls, of which Hitler, also, had been one. The result: Heidegger would leave theology without means by which to discriminate between "the inspirations of the Holy Ghost and the demons." Whatever its justice—and its justice is certainly debatable—the line understandably worked rhetorical wonders with the theologians gathered to hear him. "That there are demons" Jonas begged from them still further, "I [only] hope you agree."[59]

[58] Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 261.

[59] Ibid., 254, 258. For some responses to the talk, see William J. Richardson, "Heidegger and God—and Professor Jonas," *Thought* 15 (1965): 13–40, and Gerhard Noller, ed., *Heidegger und die Theologie: Beginn und Fortgang der Diskussion* (Munich: Chr. Kaiser, 1967).

CHAPTER SIX

DESPAIR AND RESPONSIBILITY: AFFINITIES AND DIFFERENCES IN THE THOUGHT OF HANS JONAS AND GÜNTHER ANDERS[1]

Konrad Paul Liessmann

It is one of the peculiarities in the history of the reception of philosophy in the latter years of the twentieth century that two philosophers whose paths crossed several times, who as German Jews driven out by the Nazis suffered a similar fate, and whose philosophy coincided at least in one important point—concern for the future of humanity—, are rarely mentioned in the same breath: Hans Jonas and Günther Anders.[2] Even the biographical points of contact make this omission appear most surprising. Hans Jonas and Günther Anders—the son of the renowned psychologist William Stern—met each other at the beginning of the 1920s in Edmund Husserl's seminar at Freiburg, and met each other again and became friends a short time later in Berlin in a seminar of Eduard Spranger's. Jonas recognized a brilliant talent in the slightly older student of Husserl,[3] and their intense friendship was lent a particular tenor in that a few years later, Günther Anders was to marry Hannah Arendt, Hans Jonas's close friend and Martin Heidegger's lover. Looking back, Jonas claims to have been very happy about this marriage, with his best male friend marrying his best female friend.[4]

The two philosophers were also linked by similar motives: they had originally come to Freiburg to study under Husserl. Once there, they were unable to escape from the spell of Martin Heidegger's unorthodox brand of philosophy, and followed him to Marburg, but adopted a quite

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[1] Translated from the German by Margret Vince.

[2] The following remarks represent a first approximation, and are no substitute for a comprehensive systematic comparative examination of the philosophies of Hans Jonas and Günther Anders. Such a study is urgently needed.

[3] Hans Jonas, *Erinnerungen*, based on conversations with Rachel Salamander, ed. Christian Wiese (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 2003), 85.

[4] Ibid., 167.

critical stance in relation to his thinking. Anders took his doctorate under Husserl's supervision, and in the late 1920s concentrated on outlining a negative anthropology as well as on a postdoctoral thesis (*Habilitation*) in the philosophy of music, which was then to fail due to Adorno's objection, among other things. Meanwhile, Jonas took his doctorate under Heidegger's supervision, with a thesis on the concept of gnosis, out of which grew his renowned work *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist*.

Hitler's seizure of power put an end to Jonas's plans of postdoctoral qualification, as well as to Anders's incipient journalistic career in Berlin. However, the friends differed considerably in terms of their political positions. Jonas had allied himself early on with the Zionist movement, which had set as its goal the formation of a secular Jewish national homeland in Palestine. Anders, on the other hand, evidently preferred to view himself as a left-wing author engaged in social criticism, who moved in the circle surrounding Bertolt Brecht, but without subordinating himself to the communist party or its doctrine. The story which Anders liked to tell, according to which he recognized the danger that Hitler represented early on since he was the only intellectual who did not feel it was beneath him to read *Mein Kampf*, is not however confirmed in Hans Jonas's memoirs.[5]

Against the background of their different ideological characters, it seems only fitting that in 1933 Anders fled first to Paris, and then in 1936, following his separation from Hannah Arendt, onwards to the United States; whereas immediately after Hitler had seized power, Jonas went via London to Palestine, where he became a soldier in the Jewish Brigade Group during the war. In the course of the Allied advance, he returned to Germany via Italy in July 1945 as an officer in the British army. Jonas then returned to Palestine, and was called up again in 1948, this time by the Israeli army, and following vain attempts to obtain a professorship at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, accepted first an invitation to go to Canada, and then later another to New York. It was there that at Christmas 1949, he met Anders once again, in whom he claims to have noticed a "trait of bitterness" even then.[6] Whereas in 1950, Anders went with his second wife, Elisabeth Freundlich, to Vienna, where he was to live until his death, Jonas remained in the United States, although he later repeatedly visited Europe, including

[5] Ibid., 130.
[6] Ibid., 283.

Germany, in the course of numerous travels. Even though he does not mention it in his memoirs, it is apparent from a letter to Hannah Arendt that in the course of one of these journeys with his wife, he also met Anders once more, and the correspondence between Jonas and Anders evidently extends into the late 1980s.[7]

It is possible to establish some striking affinities in the thought of Günther Anders and Hans Jonas, but also some differences. Two themes appear decisive in this connection. Both philosophers were concerned in a significant sense with the question of the continued existence of humanity against the background of its technological capability for self-destruction; and both dealt urgently with the consequences that Auschwitz must have, not only for the way humans think and act, but also for religious consciousness. In spite of their identical or similar starting points and experience, the answers that Hans Jonas and Günther Anders provided for these two questions could not have been more different.

In view of the threat posed to the human species, in his late work, *Das Prinzip Verantwortung* (1979) (published in English under the title *The Imperative of Responsibility* [1984]), Hans Jonas attempted to answer, through metaphysics, the question as to why human life should continue to exist in the future, by deducing the necessity of a continuity of its existence from a particular worthiness of humans to exist. By contrast, decades earlier Günther Anders had reflected, in the first volume of *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen* (1956), on the question of the potential destruction of the species, and had rejected all attempts to derive a justification for a special right of humanity to exist. But for him, the fact that the continued existence of humanity could not be conclusively justified did not, however, imply that one was permitted to abandon it to destruction. Both philosophers attempted to determine the fundamental ethical maxims for the technological age by reformulating the categorical imperative.

The differences that arose here are highly revealing, not only in strategic terms, but also in terms of moral philosophy. If Jonas wished to make the "permanence of genuine human life" the criterion for action, then for Anders, what was decisive was the human compatibility of the

[7] See Hans Jonas's unpublished material in the Philosophy Archives of the University of Konstanz (http://www.uni-konstanz.de/FuF/Philo/philarchiv/bestaende/Jonas.htm); however, there is no trace of this correspondence in the unpublished material of Günther Anders in Vienna.

technologies that were used. And while with the principle of responsibility, Jonas sought to provide a response to the threat to humanity that was grounded in terms of moral philosophy, Anders viewed his struggle for the continued existence of the human species ultimately as a stubborn desire, for which it was no longer possible to argue rationally, in view of what he diagnosed as the "monstrous" character of technological progress. To reproduce the conceptual images that Jonas and Anders created can not only help to illuminate the backgrounds of their controversial positions, but can also make a contribution toward an understanding of the decisive problem with which any ethics of the technological age must deal.

Both Jonas and Anders started out from the assumption that the traditional philosophical moral concepts were no longer sufficient to underpin action in the interests of humanity, in view of the destructive tendencies of the technological domination of nature, and above all in view of the possibility that the human species could self-destruct through its nuclear arsenals. In this context, Jonas points out that all previous ethical frameworks had started out from the possibilities for action and the horizon of expectations of the individual subject, and were, therefore, no longer adequate for solving the problem of lasting interventions in nature that could reduce the life opportunities of future generations, or even damage them irreversibly.

Traditional ethics, namely that of Immanuel Kant, had called on the person to act in accordance with his reason, in which as it were the idea of humanity is represented, and thus defines the immoral as a logical self-contradiction. But according to Jonas, there is "no self-contradiction in the thought that humanity would once come to an end, therefore also none in the thought that the happiness of present and proximate generations would be bought with the unhappiness or even nonexistence of later ones." In view of the destructive potential of modern technologies, the idea that the progression of generations should continue at all, in other words that humanity should continue to exist in the future too, represents the actually decisive ethical question, and it is not to be answered by recourse to an individual ethics, but can be answered only "metaphysically."[8]

[8] Hans Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 11.

So because of the crisis of traditional ethics, Jonas sees himself faced with the challenge of formulating a new imperative that includes the continued existence of the human species in its perspective, and at the same time is capable of justifying in metaphysical terms the implicit precondition that there should be life in the future as well. The manner in which Jonas has formulated this imperative has played a decisive role in the ecological and technology-critical debates of the 1980s. But these are to be remembered at this point primarily in order to emphasize the contrast to the reformulation of imperatives in Anders's work. Jonas formulated this imperative *inter alia* as follows: "Act so that the effects of your action are compatible with the permanence of genuine human life," or, expressed in negative terms: "Act so that the effects of your action are not destructive for the future possibility of such life."[9] With this, ultimately Jonas wanted to say that we are permitted—for whatever reasons—"to risk our own life—but not that of humanity." He was clear about the fact that these formulations made the "time horizon," in a previously unknown form, into a determining criterion of ethical behavior, to the extent to which they declared the "future" to be the last meaning-horizon of responsible action.[10]

Aside from the question of how one can define such concepts as "genuine human life" qualitatively in view of possible future developments, the decisive aspect of the new categorical imperative lies in Jonas's attempt to define the demand that humanity should continue to exist in the future too in metaphysical terms—for him, that means: ontologically. The old question—posed by Leibniz and Schelling amongst others, and taken up again by Heidegger—as to why there is something and even more why there is not nothing, becomes for Jonas too a leitmotif in his attempt at justification: at the center of this justification stands the thesis that in contrast to Nothingness, Being represents a value that grants Being superiority over Nothingness.[11] Jonas wins plausibility for this thesis by demonstrating that even purposes that can be interpreted as values are based in nature itself. In a further step, he deduces that "we can regard the mere capacity to have any purposes at all as a good in itself, of which we grasp with intuitive certainty that it is infinitely superior to any purposelessness of being." If one

[9] Ibid., 11.
[10] Ibid., 11–12.
[11] Ibid., 48.

postulates this insight, understood as self-evident, as an "ontological axiom," then there follows from this a "Self-affirmation of Being in Purpose," to which an emphatic "'No' to Nonbeing" corresponds.[12] Now the human being, who is not merely the product of nature, but stands in a reflexive relation to it, must make this "yes" the maxim of his action, and thus make it not only an element of his "will," but must also make it an "ought." For Jonas, the conclusion that there should continue to be human beings ultimately results from the fact that a higher ontological value is inherent in their existence and the associated life opportunities than in their non-existence. In view of the threat posed to life on this planet, in his view the necessary result is the concept of an ethics of responsibility that raises the preservation of life in respect of its future opportunities to the level of the criterion of both individual and collective action.

For Anders too, traditional ethics had become untenable in the twentieth century. However, his approach appears to be more radical than that of Jonas: "The religious and philosophical ethics that have existed until now have become, without exception, completely obsolete; they were exploded along with Hiroshima and exterminated in Auschwitz."[13] With this dictum, Anders characterized the situation of ethics in a way that leaves open no opportunity for salvaging any decisive benefit for the present day from the tradition of ethics and ethical reflections of the past, not even in the sense of deriving a new responsibility. For him, it was far more a matter of analyzing the extent to which the technologically altered world, along with the associated possibilities for destroying humanity, had also liquidated previous moral imperatives. From the analysis, it is then certainly possible to draw conclusions that provide information about which standards action should orientate itself by if the claim to humanity—and for Anders too, that is simply the continued existence of human beings—is not to be given up completely.

In contrast to Jonas, however, Anders on principle dispenses with providing a philosophical justification for an ethics that has the existence of the human species as its aim. Precisely because, in his view, the human species is accorded no preferential ontological position, an ethics cannot be deduced ontologically-metaphysically either, and

[12] Ibid., 80ff.

[13] Günther Anders, *Besuch im Hades: Auschwitz und Breslau 1966* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1979), 195.

specifically in view of the threat to humanity. In the anthropological essays of his younger years, Anders had defined the human being as an unworldly, even world-less being, which in contrast to animals, is not fitted into any world, but must always first create a world for himself. However, this does not mean any special ontological position, but is to be diagnosed as a burdensome extraterritoriality, as a "pathology of freedom."[14]

The view that was formulated by Kant—that humans were accorded a purposiveness which, in contrast to everything else in nature, could become a means so that the human being was the aim, the *telos* of nature—was repeatedly disputed by Anders, particularly since he saw in it the shortcoming of western ethics.[15] One could no more deduce the human being's value from his position in the world than from a putative hierarchy of Being, which Anders did not wish to accept any longer. However, the "pathology of freedom" does have the consequence that the human being is a being that not only has the possibility of taking decisions, but is practically compelled to do so. Because we are not completely determined in our actions, we are, however, confronted with the freedom—that is, with the necessity—to choose or refrain from certain actions. This freedom certainly appeared to Anders to be a form of compulsion, which absolutely imposes on humans the inevitability of "ought": "there is nothing else left for us: *we must 'ought.'*" That humans must give themselves laws, rules, norms, since natural instincts are not sufficient, was for Anders primarily a necessity, not a virtue. Immanuel Kant's apotheosis of moral law interestingly became the object of criticism for precisely that reason: "The basic philosophical... question must be the one concerning the *conditions of necessity*, not the transcendental one concerning the *conditions of possibility*."[16] Anders thus also picked up an idea from his early debate with Heidegger, whom he had accused—in his study on the latter's "sham concreteness" (*Scheinkonkretheit*)—of having inquired only into the conditions for the possibility of freedom, but not into the "condition of necessity."[17]

[14] Compare this with Günther Anders, *Mensch ohne Welt. Schriften zur Kunst und Literatur* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1984), xiv; and Konrad P. Liessmann, *Günther Anders: Philosophieren im Zeitalter der technologischen Revolutionen* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2002), 30ff.

[15] Günther Anders, *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen*, vol. 2: *Über die Zerstörung des Lebens im Zeitalter der dritten industriellen Revolution* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1980), 432–33.

[16] Günther Anders, *Ketzereien* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1982), 258.

[17] Günther Anders, *Über Heidegger*, ed. Gerhard Oberschlick, with an epilogue by Dieter Thomä (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2001), 89.

However, Anders saw this compulsion to "ought," and thus the precarious opportunity—in whatever form—for freedom, as being endangered by developments that were capable of revoking the "ought." For example, Anders viewed the ideology and destructive practice of national socialism as an attempt to fix the human being to a predetermined nature, to a "being" or "entity" (*Seiendes*), and in this way to make an "ought" into a "must":

> If a Being (the Aryan) by his very nature and irrevocably embodies Good, and another Being (the Jew) likewise by his very nature and irrevocably embodies Evil, then there is *no room* left *for freedom* (the choice between Good and Evil), and that too is irrevocably so; and equally irrevocably there is no room *left over* for the "ought," which is now as it were squashed between "being" (*Sein*) and "must."

Under such conditions, the Kantian concept of duty is perverted. If Kant had understood the duty to act as the call to orientate oneself by reason that followed the categorical imperative—in other words to consider, for every action, whether the fundamental maxims could apply for all people—then, for the Nazis, duty now became the phantasm of having to do what nature demanded. Anders formulated this succinctly and precisely in a manner that no doubt also applies for other, similar ontologizations of Good and Evil: "*Where Must rules, there can be no Ought.*"[18]

Günther Anders was accordingly concerned with the analysis of those factors which—although in individual cases even a product of the freedom of human action—determine it in turn. Elsewhere, he expressed this question as follows: "Be moral, even though you cannot justify the fact that *Ought should be*, and even regard it as unjustifiable."[19] There is no contradiction here of what has been said above, since the human being—as the being that is forced to "ought"—cannot deduce from this "ought" that he himself ought to exist (be), in an ontological sense. The fact that he as a human being *must* "*ought*" does not mean that he as a human being *ought to exist*. Or to put it another way: the human being is forced, through his specific existence, toward ethics, yet his existence itself cannot be deduced from ethics, just as one cannot justify the latter philosophically.

[18] Anders, *Besuch im Hades*, 211.
[19] Günther Anders, *Philosophische Stenogramme* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1993), 48ff.

As a consequence of these reflections, Anders postulated a "moral nihilism." In this sense, ethics remains a "utopian," i.e., impossible venture. But for Anders, the fact that the existence of the human species cannot be justified positively does not mean that it should therefore not exist. He did not make an anthropofugal program out of his moral nihilism, for just as one cannot justify why human life should exist (be), the opposite does not follow from that either. In relation to the justifiability of ethics and the existence of humans, in his book *Ketzereien* (Heresies), Anders therefore professed a double nihilism, but emphasized that this had never influenced him as an acting being. Anders thus drew no practical conclusions from his nihilism, but left it at the provocation that as a nihilist, he insisted with "iron inconsistency" on the survival of humanity.[20]

The question as to what the point would be of humanity existing instead of not existing is, for Anders, "meaningful at most in the area of theoretical reason (even if it is unanswerable), and for practical reason on the other hand it is uninteresting. It is of no concern to the moralist. He is satisfied with the penultimate."[21] In order for it to be defended as worth living, the life of the human being does not need any metaphysical meaning. The meaning of life is therefore likewise unsuitable as a foundation for the ultimate justification of an ethics. For his practical struggle for the survival of humanity, Anders needed no justification. Even if the theoretical insight into the impossibility, on principle, of this justification, caused him to despair metaphysically, this must not have any significance for one's actions: "If I am in despair, what does it matter to me."[22]

Beyond the question of a philosophical ultimate justification of ethics, Anders was, however, just as specifically interested in the moral question as Jonas was. Ultimately, he was concerned not just with the ethical and historico-philosophical question of the nuclear self-destruction of humanity, which had now become conceivable, but also with the way in which technological progress decisively altered the life of human beings. The concern that the possibilities of technology could result not so much in a gain in freedom as in a creeping dehumanization concerned Anders as much as it did Jonas. However, in contrast,

[20] Anders, *Ketzereien*, 197–98.
[21] Anders, *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen*, vol. II, 390.
[22] Günther Anders, *Die atomare Drohung: Radikale Überlegungen* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1981), 105.

he responded not with a new ethics of responsibility, but shifted the moral problem into the structure of the technological itself. The conventional ideas of ethics, as expressed in the current debates about genetic engineering and bioethics, still assume that ethical norms and guidelines are required that regulate our dealings with the possibilities that are opened up by technological progress. But in a radical reinterpretation of the basic ethical situation, Günther Anders insisted on the insight that it was not our ethical maxims that control the use of the machines, but rather that the maxims of the machines stipulate the guidelines for action for us. This means not only that everything that is technologically possible will ultimately be realized, but also that what is permitted, decreed, or prohibited depends solely on what the machines and the technologies permit. For this reason, Anders could postulate that in the technological era, a "categorical imperative" applied *de facto* determines the actual actions of human beings more strongly than any moral law: "Act so that the maxim of your actions could be that of the apparatus of which you are or shall be a part"—or expressed negatively: "Never act so that the maxim of your actions contradicts the maxims of the apparatuses of which you are or shall be a part."[23]

Anders's basic thesis for an ethics appropriate to the age is thus that the "ought" has ultimately been taken from the human being by machines—a premise that relates not only to the big questions concerning the future of humanity, but also to everyday morality:

> It is products, in other words *things*, that characterize humans. Indeed it would hardly be an exaggeration to assert that these days *morals* are determined and asserted almost exclusively by things.... If we have a code of manners, this is dictated by things.[24]

The "ought" is thus transformed by the machines that we surround us into a "must"; possibilities for actions become necessities, which appear as it were as natural practical constraints. Freedom, and thus the possibility of acting as a human being, can be preserved only in a sovereignty—which must be continually restored—in relation to the technologies, for "everyone has those principles that the thing has, which he has."[25] For this reason, Anders expressed his positive reformulation

[23] Anders, *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen*, vol. II, 290.
[24] Ibid., 260–61.
[25] Günther Anders, *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen*, vol. 1: *Über die Seele im Zeitalter der zweiten industriellen Revolution*, 5th ed., with an additional preface (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1980) preface, 1980, 296.

of the categorical imperative as follows: "Have only such things whose maxims for action could also become the maxims of your own action."[26] Whichever maxims an ethics wishes to follow, the condition for its possibility is decided by the relation of these maxims to the instructions for action and the standardizations of thinking and acting that have always been delivered along with technology.

One could, as it were, preface the reformulations of the categorical imperative in Hans Jonas with this thought: whoever is interested in a permanence of genuine human life must take care that he does not contradict this intention simply by using machines whose immanent logic includes destroying just that "genuine human life." Such an approach does not result in blind technophobia, but it does result in rational reflection by each one of us on the immanent aims of our apparatuses. In more detailed analyses—Anders on television, Jonas on questions of medical ethics—both philosophers have outlined what such reflection can look like.[27] So even if the two philosophers clearly differ on the question of the justifiability of the existence of the human species, in the approaches to an ethics that aims at the continuation of human life on Earth, points of agreement can certainly be established.

This phenomenon of simultaneous intellectual proximity and distance can also be found in another area of their thought. Both these philosophers, who came from secular Jewish families and had been confronted with their Judaism in an existential manner by the Nazis' policy of destruction, had posed—albeit years later—the painful question of the consequences of the Shoah for belief in the biblical God and for a modern debate with the problem of theodicy. However, in the question as to what conclusions can be drawn in terms of religious philosophy or theology from the mass murders of the twentieth century, Hans Jonas and Günther Anders had diametrically opposed positions. Whereas Jonas, in an impressive and moving text—*Der Gottesbegriff nach Auschwitz. Eine jüdische Stimme*—voiced the thought that after Auschwitz, one could speak only of a God at the mercy of the actions of humans, for Anders Auschwitz and Hiroshima provided the strongest indications that God could not exist. As can be seen from *Erinnerungen*, Hans Jonas's memoirs, for all their divergence in the question as to whether and to

[26] Ibid., 298.
[27] See ibid., 97ff., and Hans Jonas, *Technik, Medizin, und Ethik: Praxis des Prinzips Verantwortung* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1987).

what extent one can conceive of a God after Auschwitz, they still at least accorded respect to the other's opinion.[28]

In its modern version, the problem of theodicy goes back to Leibniz, but has at its core—the question of how God can be justified in the face of evil—its first great interpretation in Job's complaint in the face of his suffering, which he can no longer understand. The Greek philosopher Epicurus provided the first logical version of this problem. In response to the question as to why God could allow suffering, the philosopher, who raised the avoidance of pain to the maxim of his philosophy, is said to have answered:

> Either God wants to eliminate evil and cannot, or he can do so and does not want to, or he cannot and does not want to, or else he can and he wants to. If he wants to, and cannot, then he is weak, which does not apply to God. If he can and does not want to, then he is cruel, which is likewise alien to God. If he does not wish to and cannot, then he is both cruel and weak, and then also not God. But if he wishes to and can, as is only fitting for God, where does evil come from and why does he not eliminate it?[29]

The precision of these deductions, with which the possibilities available in principle for thinking about the relationship between God and evil were explored, are unsurpassable. All discourses about theodicy, with whatever cunning they were conducted, faced the problem—even if often unspoken—of having to answer Epicurus's final question, since all the other possibilities appeared unreasonable or unthinkable. But it was ultimately precisely this question that determined Anders's and Jonas's reflections on God after Auschwitz.

In *Ketzereien*, his partially fabricated, diary-like records, Anders has once again posed the question of the justification of God in view of the mass murders of the twentieth century in all radicalism and naiveté. In the context of a survey, the philosopher is confronted by a television journalist with the question: "*Do you believe in God, and if not, why not?*" This question—"impertinent" even to his "un-prissy" ears—is followed by an Andersian lecture that the journalist—if indeed he existed—would have remembered for a long time:

[28] Jonas, *Erinnerungen*, 346–47.

[29] Epikur [Epicurus], *Von der Überwindung der Furcht: Katechismus—Lehrbriefe—Spruchsammlung—Fragmente*, transl., Olof Gigon (Munich: Artemis & Winkler, 1983), 136.

> First of all, I told him that I did not know what was meant by the word "believe." His jaw dropped, as if I had, in an unprecedented manner, broken a contract that automatically applied along with the television commission.... "If [God] exists," I said very slowly, "then it is a God *who did not prevent Auschwitz and Hiroshima*.... In other words, it is *one who*, his arms folded, *allowed* these two events.... *Is* such a God a just God? *Would* such a God *be* a just God? A loving God? A merciful God? One to whom we could pray without degrading ourselves? One to whom we could pray without being ashamed? Without making ourselves accomplices to what he allowed to happen?... Don't you think it is then better for there to be no God?"[30]

In view of the horrors of the twentieth century—and Anders consistently mentions Auschwitz and Hiroshima in the same breath—the professed atheist ratchets up in a staccato-like manner the arguments which, albeit in another form, have been adduced since Leibniz against the defense of God, into a historical anti-God proof. In view of what people have done to other people in this century, in view of the complete and systematic destruction of whole populations and peoples, a compassionate God is no longer conceivable. As regards the freedom of humans, over which God is said to have no power, Anders does not even wish to get involved with that in the first place: for he speaks from the perspective of the victims. Their suffering should have moved any God who might exist to intervene. But since this did not happen, God cannot exist. Anders did not, however, intend that Auschwitz—and not Hiroshima—could perhaps precisely because of that become the core of a secular negative theology; rather, the contrary. In a no doubt similarly not quite authentic conversation with a priest on a train journey from Bad Ischl to Vienna, Anders calls the belief in a God who "allowed" Auschwitz virtually a "blasphemy," and then continues—countering the priest's helpless attempts at objection:

> "Or do you think that he [God] knew as little about it [Auschwitz] as the German people from 1945 onwards? In other words: *knew, but did not wish to know*. And the question is not directed only at you, but also at the rabbis. And at all the descendants of the six million. Occasionally I even ask myself whether it could really have been so great to file into the gas ovens with the praises for him who let this happen on one's lips. Whether that is not—but out of respect for what cannot be said, which I have been spared without deserving it, I dare ask only very quietly—whether these

[30] Anders, *Ketzereien*, 33–34.

> songs of praise are not perhaps somewhat..." I did not dare to utter the word "unworthy." And I let this conversation peter out.[31]

In a lecture given in 1984 at the Protestant theological faculty of the University of Tübingen, Hans Jonas—now of quite advanced years—likewise once again faced the question of the concept of God after Auschwitz. In this, he decidedly and consciously meant the God of Judaism, and called his reflections a "piece of frankly speculative theology."[32] In view of the occurrences of the Shoah, Jonas too once again took up the conceptual images of theodicy that had been handed down since Job and Epicurus:

> After Auschwitz, we can assert with greater force than ever before that an omnipotent deity would have to be either not good or (in his world rule, in which alone we can "observe" him) totally unintelligible. But if God is to be intelligible in some manner and to some extent (and to this we must hold), then his goodness must be compatible with the existence of evil, and this is only if he is not all powerful.[33]

In contrast to Anders, for whom the destruction of European Judaism and the bombing of Hiroshima ultimately represented a negative proof of God, from quite similar premises Jonas reached a completely different conclusion. It is not God's non-existence that becomes visible in the catastrophe of the Jewish people, but his complete powerlessness: "Through the years that 'Auschwitz' raged God remained silent .... Not because he chose not to, but because he *could* not intervene did he fail to intervene."[34] With splendid, moving words, Jonas described the fascinating and terrifying picture of a God who is too weak to intervene in the happenings in the world that were initiated by him, but nonetheless solicits the love of human beings for his project of creation:

> For reasons decisively prompted by contemporary experience, I entertain the idea of God who for a time—the time of the ongoing world process—has divested himself of any power to interfere with the physical course of things; and who responds to the impact on his being by worldly events, not "with a mighty hand and outstretched arm," as we Jews on

[31] Ibid., 104–5.
[32] Hans Jonas, "The Concept of God after Auschwitz: A Jewish Voice," in idem, *Mortality and Morality: A Search for the Good after Auschwitz*, ed. Lawrence Vogel (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 131–43, here 131.
[33] Ibid., 140.
[34] Ibid.

> every Passover recite in remembering the exodus from Egypt, but with the mutely insistent appeal of his unfulfilled goal.[35]

The weak, powerless God: that is undoubtedly also God who is near, who paradoxically appears easier to understand than an all-powerful *deus absconditus*. To be weak, to be unable to intervene and nonetheless to want to be loved—that is not only comprehensible, that is above all deeply human. After Auschwitz, so Jonas's thesis runs, we have no option but to think of God in this form. Today, belief means believing in this weak God, and as it were by attempting oneself to improve on the project of creation, to rush to his assistance and to do everything so that he does not need to despair of himself. But one might ask, does not this notion that the human being should empathize with and pity the powerless God presuppose that *hubris* of likeness to God which, since the fall from grace, has been regarded as the origin of evil? And in a theology of the weak God, does one not close a circle that has begun with an ultimately technologically induced self-empowerment of human beings and now leads to the powerlessness of the Almighty?

While Jonas, in spite of Auschwitz and in spite of the atomic bomb, wanted to save a God whom according to his own account he ultimately never doubted,[36] and wanted to save him even at the cost of powerlessness, Anders ultimately regarded adherence to such belief—and this seems to be the decisive point—as no longer compatible with human dignity. The fact that Anders, in contrast to Jonas, demonstratively wished to dispense with justifying the meaning of human life metaphysically also motivated his radical atheism, for which Auschwitz and Hiroshima represented something like the last, terrible confirmations. In the final reckoning, in his view not only was the existence of humans unjustifiable, but also the meaning of their lives. The "question of meaning," so beloved of popular practical philosophy, Anders always rebuffed with a hard and consistent denial. Even in his early studies on the philosophy of Heidegger, he said:

> If one secularizes *Dasein*, then one relinquishes the possibility of a philosophy of meaning.... For the concept of meaning is "meaningless" without transcendence.... We have no meaning. For only the un-free has any "meaning."[37]

[35] Ibid., 140–41.
[36] Jonas, *Erinnerungen*, 341–42.
[37] Anders, *Über Heidegger*, 249–50.

Only those things have a meaning whose purpose is determined by someone, and over which it is possible to dispose. The life of the human being, even that of the human species, would only have any meaning if it were designated, by a higher-order authority, as a purpose, as a means for something else. For Anders, giving a meaning to life always meant robbing oneself of one's freedom, and thus of the opportunity for self-determination, in other words, to be there "for" something else or someone else.

Later, Anders generalized this critique of the concept of meaning, developed in the debate with Heidegger, in an analysis of the "antiquated nature of meaning":

> "*To have meaning for*..." (always) means: *to be heteronomous*, to be the means to an end, to be un-free. Is it really so certain that having meaning is a badge of honor, and that not having meaning is a deficit? Does not our search for meaning perhaps ultimately amount to a search for servitude, even if we call this meaning (because we do not find it) "deep"...?[38]

Anders furthermore pointed out that the philosophical tradition had almost never inquired after the "meaning of the positive," but always only after the point of suffering. In other words, it was kindled by the negations of life, whose "*Dasein*" could not be reconciled with the "will of God" and therefore required justification. The question of meaning that had become fashionable thus turns out to be the "secularized version of the theodicy question." It is the "camouflaged question of justification of the atheist." If one does not wish to accept a God that could have something "in mind" for humans, then there is also no preordained role or function for human beings. According to Anders, with the "death of God" one should also proclaim the "death of meaning": we are "unintended beings" who wander "unpiloted through the ocean of that which is."[39]

Specifically in relation to this "unintendedness," Jonas retorted:

> I am however deeply convinced that pure atheism is wrong, that there is something beyond that, which we perhaps can express only with the aid of metaphors, but without which the overall view of being would be incomprehensible.[40]

[38] Anders, *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen*, vol. II, 387–88.
[39] Ibid., 385–86.
[40] Jonas, *Erinnerungen*, 347.

Jonas's ethics of responsibility, therefore theoretically, cannot be separated from the endeavor to understand the "overall view of being." In its practical consequences, however, it resembles the unconditional practical ethics of Anders: both conceptions are carried by a great skepticism toward technological progress, both conceptions fear for the future of humanity. Philosophically, at this point one should ask further what value the attempts at justification, or their refusal, and the conception of transcendence or its negation, really has for the practical action with which the human being is concerned. For both philosophers must finally leave open one decisive question: the question of what, ultimately, could be called relevant to humans. In concrete terms, the "genuine human life," whose permanence Jonas calls for, remains as indeterminate as the criterion against which Anders reads the "antiquated nature" of humans. The sharpness and lucidity with which the two friends, so similar to one another and yet so different, have presented their positions does not absolve us of the task—in view of the new technology and in view of the nuclear arms race which is continued or could be continued at any time—of continually posing anew the question of what it can mean to live humanly, as a human.

CHAPTER SEVEN

ERNST BLOCH'S *PRINZIP HOFFNUNG* AND HANS JONAS'S *PRINZIP VERANTWORTUNG*[1]

Michael Löwy

I had the pleasure of meeting Ernst Bloch in person. We met in 1974, in his apartment in Tübingen, not far from the school at which—as he was frequently fond of recalling in his writings—Hegel, Schelling, and Hölderlin, as youths, planted a tree in 1789 to celebrate the French Revolution. He was already eighty-nine years old, practically blind, but retained an impressive intellectual clarity.

One of his remarks in the course of our conversation particularly impressed me, because it summed up the lifelong stubborn loyalty to the idea of utopia:

> The world as it exists is not true. There is a second concept of truth that is not positivist, that is not based on confirmation of the actual [...], but is more *wertgeladen* [value-laden], as for example in the concept of "a true friend" or Juvenal's expression *tempestas poetica*—that is, a tempest such as is found in the book, a "poetic storm" such as reality has never known, a tempest driven to the ultimate, a radical storm. So a true storm, in this case in relation to aesthetics, poetry; but in the case of the expression "a true friend" by contrast in relation to the moral domain. And if that does not accord with the facts—and for us Marxists, facts are nothing but reified moments of a process—then so much the worse for the facts, as old Hegel used to say.[2]

Even though the references are in Latin or German, on reading these words it is hard to avoid thinking of an old Jewish characteristic that is captured perfectly by the familiar Hebrew or Yiddish term *chutzpah* or *chutzpe* which, very roughly translated, approximates to "cheek," "impertinence," or "provocation."

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[1] Translated from the German by Margret Vince.

[2] I have published this conversation in the appendix to my book *Pour une sociologie des intellectuels révolutionnaires: L'évolution politique de Lukács 1909–1929* (Paris: Maspero, 1976), 294.

From his first writings onwards—*Geist der Utopie* (1918) (published in English as *The Spirit of Utopia* in 2000) and *Thomas Münzer als Theologe der Revolution* (1921)—the daydream of utopia stands at the center of Bloch's thought. His philosophy explores diverse philosophical, literary, and religious sources, among which that of Jewish messianism occupies a special place. In one chapter of *The Spirit of Utopia* entitled "Symbol: The Jews", Bloch extolled Judaism as the religion that had the essential power to hope "for the Messiah, for the call of the Messiah."[3] According to him, it is this belief that makes for the historical continuity of the "people of the psalms and the prophets," and inspired, at the beginning of the twentieth century, a reawakening of "pride in being a Jew."[4] According to Bloch, Jesus was a true Jewish prophet, but not the true Messiah: the "remote Messiah," the savior, the "last, unknown Christ" has not yet come.[5]

For Bloch, as for Walter Benjamin, revolutionary utopia is inseparably associated with a messianic or chiliastic concept of time that stands counter to any gradualism of progress. In relation to Thomas Münzer and the Peasants' War of the sixteenth century, he remarks:

> It was not for better days, but for the end of all days that the war was being fought here . . ., not to overcome earthly difficulties in a eudaemonistic, unincorporated civilization, but to de-realize in the breakthrough of the kingdom.

His train of thought is strangely "syncretistic," simultaneously Jewish and Christian: for example in that other passage in the book about Münzer, which compares the "third, last gospel" of Joachim di Fiore with the chiliasm of the Anabaptist peasants and the messianism of the Kabbalists of Safed who, to the north of the Sea of Galilee, awaited "the messianic savior" "who topples empire and papacy . . . and shall bring about *Olam-ha-Tikkun*, the true kingdom of God." That is not just historical reflection: in 1921, Bloch believed in imminent revolutionary change in Europe, which he described, in Jewish-messianic language, like the Princess Sabbath who shone concealed behind a "thin, crackling

[3] Ernst Bloch, *Geist der Utopie* (Munich and Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1918), 330f.

[4] Ibid., 319.

[5] Ibid., 323 and 331f. On this, see the lovely book by Arno Münster, *Figures de l'utopie dans la pensée d'Ernst Bloch* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1985).

wall," whilst "high above the ruins and broken cultural spheres of this world, the spirit of unimaginable utopia" shines in.[6]

Das Prinzip Hoffnung (*The Principle of Hope*) is Ernst Bloch's most important book, and undoubtedly one of the most significant works of emancipatory thinking in the twentieth century. With its monumental scope of more than sixteen hundred pages, it occupied its author for a large part of his life. Written between 1938 and 1947 during his exile in the United States, it was revised in 1953 and then again in 1959. After Bloch's condemnation as a "revisionist" by the authorities in the GDR, he left that country at the time that the Berlin Wall went up (1961).[7]

No one had ever written such a book, which—with the same visionary breath—embraced the pre-Socratics and Hegel, alchemy and the novellas of E. T. A. Hoffmann, the ophitic heresy and the messianism of Sabbatai Zvi, Schelling's philosophy of art and Marxist materialism, Mozart's operas and the utopias of Charles Fourier. Let us open a page at random: it deals with Renaissance man, the concept of matter in Paracelsus and Jakob Böhme, the "Holy Family" in Marx, the epistemology of Giordano Bruno and of Spinoza's *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*. Bloch had such an encyclopedic knowledge that few readers were capable, on the basis of expert knowledge, of judging each of the topics developed in the three volumes of the book. His style is frequently hermetic, but has a high degree of suggestive force: it is up to the reader to learn to filter out the precious nuggets scattered by the poetic, sometimes even esoteric pen of the philosopher.[8]

In contrast to so many thinkers of his generation, for example his friend Georg Lukács, Bloch remained loyal to the intuitions of his youth and never denied the revolutionary romanticism of his early writings.

[6] Ernst Bloch, *Thomas Münzer als Theologe der Revolution* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1985), 63f., 58, 228f. Hans Jonas accuses Marxism in general, and Bloch in particular, of its messianism, its "secularized eschatology," its chiliasm and its extreme endeavors toward a "transformation of man," which in his view is associated with the refusal "merely to improve conditions" on the basis of a rational, efficient "program of reform"; see Hans Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 178–79.

[7] In December 1956, the official party organ *Neues Deutschland* wrote: "Bloch's philosophy has objectively served reactionary political goals"; quoted after Arno Münster's introduction in Ernst Bloch, *Tagträume von aufrechtem Gang: Sechs Interviews mit Ernst Bloch* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1978), 11.

[8] See the discussion by Jack Zipes of Wayne Hudson, *The Marxist Philosophy of Ernst Bloch* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), in *Telos* 58 (1983/84): 227–31. Regarding the page in question, see Ernst Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, 3 vols. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1959), 2:996f.

Thus in *The Principle of Hope*, one encounters numerous references to *The Spirit of Utopia*, in particular to the idea of utopia as an anticipatory consciousness, as a figure of "pre-appearance."

Ernst Bloch's fundamental objective was this: philosophy should have the consciousness of tomorrow, side with the future, and nurture the knowledge of hope, since otherwise it would have no more knowledge. In his view, it was the will to utopia that had guided all liberation movements in the history of humanity: "All Christians too know it in their way, with a dormant awareness or with sadness, from the parts of the Bible relating to exodus and Messianism."[9]

Bloch's philosophy of hope is above all a theory of the "not-yet-being" in its diverse manifestations: the "not-yet-conscious, not-yet-expressed, not-yet-manifested in the world."[10] For him, the world is full of being that is aimed at something, full of a tendency toward something, full of latency, and the "something" to which it is inclined is the realization of the utopian goal—a world free of undignified suffering, anxiety, and alienation. In his search for the anticipatory functions of the human spirit, the dream plays an important role—from the most mundane form, the daydream, to the "dream of the future" inspired by ideals.[11]

The central paradox of *The Principle of Hope* lies in the fact that this powerful text, facing the horizon of the future, the front and the new, the not-yet-existing, says almost nothing about the future. Practically nowhere does it attempt to portray the coming face of human society, to predict it or even to hint at it, except in the classical terms of the Marxist perspective: a classless society without oppression. Bloch is not interested in science fiction or modern futurology at all. In reality, his book—apart from the more theoretical chapters—is an immense, fascinating journey through the *past*—in search of the images of longing and landscapes of hope scattered amongst the social, medicinal, architectural, technical, philosophical, religious, geographic, musical, and artistic utopias.

This quite special form of a typically romantic dialectic of past and future is aimed at discovering the future in the aspirations of the past, in the form of the unfulfilled promise: "The rigid divisions between the

[9] Ibid., 1:6.
[10] Ibid., 1:12.
[11] Ibid., 1:10.

future and the past thus collapse themselves, unrealized future becomes visible in the past; avenged and inherited, established and fulfilled past becomes visible in the future."[12] According to this, it is not a matter of sinking into a wistful, melancholic contemplation of the past, but of gaining from it a living source for the revolutionary action that is geared toward realizing utopia.

The necessary counterpart to anticipatory thinking directed toward the future world is the critical view of the present-day world: the vehement critique of industrial-capitalist civilization and its dire consequences represents one of the (frequently overlooked) main themes of *The Principle of Hope*. Bloch denounces the "purely despicable" and the "ruthless meanness" of what he calls "today's commercial life"—a "thoroughly crooked" world, in which "the greed for profit [overshadows] all human stirrings."[13] He also battles against the cold, functional modern cities that no longer represent a *Heimat* [home town] (one of the key motifs in the book), but are "machines for living," which reduce human beings to the state of "standardized termites."[14] Devoid of all ornament and of any organic line, disputing the gothic inheritance of the tree of life, these modern edifices are reminiscent of the crystal of death embodied by the pyramids of Egypt. Ultimately, the functional architecture "reflects and doubles" "the ice-cold mechanical world of consumer society, its alienation, its people subject to division of labor, its abstract technology."[15]

Among these forms of anticipatory consciousness, religion holds a privileged position in *The Principle of Hope*, since in Bloch's view it embodies utopia *par excellence*, the utopia of perfection, the totality of hope. Nevertheless, one must be more precise and say that the religion to which Bloch is referring is an "atheist religion"—one of his favorite paradoxes. It concerns a kingdom of God without God, which topples the master of the world from his celestial throne and replaces him with a "mystical democracy." "Atheism is consequently so little the enemy of religious utopia, that it forms its precondition: without atheism, messianism has no place."[16]

[12] Ibid., 1:7.
[13] Ibid., 1:171.
[14] Ibid., 2:861.
[15] Ibid., 2:869.
[16] Ibid., 3:1413.

However, Bloch insisted on distinguishing his religious atheism quite clearly from any vulgar materialism, from the "badly disenchanted,"[17] as promoted by the most uninspired version of the Enlightenment—what he termed *Aufkläricht* in order to distinguish it from *Aufklärung* (Enlightenment)—and by the bourgeois doctrines of secularization. It is not a matter of opposing belief with the banalities of free thinking, but of rescuing the treasures of hope and the contents of longing from religion, by transposing them to the immanent—treasures among which one finds, in various forms, the communist idea: from the primitive communism of the Bible (a legacy of the nomadic communities), through the monastic communism of Joachim di Fiore, to the communism of the chiliastic heresies (the Albigensians, Hussites, Taborites, and Anabaptists). In order to provide evidence of the presence of this tradition in modern socialism, Bloch mischievously ended his chapter about Joachim di Fiore with a little-known, quite surprising quotation from the early Friedrich Engels:

> The self-awareness of humanity is the new grail, around whose throne the peoples assemble, rejoicing. . . .That is our vocation, that we become knights of this grail, that for it, we gird the sword to our loins and joyfully devote our lives to the last holy war that shall be followed by the thousand-year empire of freedom.[18]

What Marxism newly asserts is the *docta spes* (wise hope), the science of reality, the active knowledge that devotes itself to action that will change the world, and to the horizon of the future. In contrast to the abstract utopias of the past, which restricted themselves to opposing the existing world with their ideal, Marxism starts out from the tendencies and objective possibilities present in reality itself: it is only this mediation of the real that permits the concrete utopia to be brought about.

By way of an aside: In spite of his pre-1956 admiration for the Soviet Union and his lack of criticism of the bureaucratic dictatorial system of the Eastern bloc states, Bloch never confused "actually existing socialism" with this concrete utopia, which as he understood it remained an unachieved tendency or latency, an as-yet unrealized ideal. His philosophical system was based entirely on the category of the not-yet-being, not on the rational legitimization of some "actually existing" state or other.

[17] Ibid., 3:1519.
[18] Ibid., 2:598.

Bloch's Marxism was fairly heterodox: whereas Marx bade farewell to utopia, and Engels, in a well-known pamphlet of 1888, extolled socialism's transition "from utopia to science," Bloch did not hesitate to reverse this order. Certainly, he did not dispute the necessity of science: socialism was capable of playing its revolutionary role only in the inseparable unity of rationality and imagination, of reason and hope, of the rigor of the detective and the enthusiasm of the dreamer. According to a well-known formulation, one needed to unite the "cold current" and the "warm current" of Marxism, both equally indispensable features, with one another. However, Bloch created a clear hierarchy between the two elements: the "cold current" exists for the "warm current," and is there to serve it.[19]

The "warm current" of Marxism inspired what Bloch described as its "militant optimism," its active hope for the *novum*, for the realization of utopia. Hans Jonas criticized this "merciless optimism" of Bloch's,[20] and it is true that the author of *The Principle of Hope* appears to have succumbed to this weakness. However, justice requires us to bear in mind that he criticized most emphatically what he called "banal, automatic optimism about progress." In the knowledge that this false optimism has a dangerous tendency to become the new opiate of the masses, he was even of the opinion that "even a dose of pessimism would be preferable to the banal, automatic belief in progress per se. For pessimism on a realistic scale is at any rate not so helplessly surprised by failures and catastrophes." He consistently insisted on the "objective unguaranteed nature" of utopian hope.[21]

In a homage to Ernst Bloch, Theodor W. Adorno, one of the most pessimistic thinkers of the century, asserted that the author of *The Principle of Hope* was one of those remarkably rare philosophers of our time who had never given up the idea of a world without domination and hierarchy.[22]

Contrary to what Hans Jonas appears to suggest, there is not necessarily a contradiction between the "principle of hope," as Bloch formulates it, and the "imperative of responsibility," in the sense of

[19] Ibid., 3:1616–21.
[20] Hans Jonas, *Das Prinzip Verantwortung: Versuch einer Technik für die technologische Zivilisation* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1979), 386 (these expressions are omitted in the English version).
[21] Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, 1:228 and 3:1624.
[22] Theodor W. Adorno, *Noten zur Literatur*, vol. 2 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1971), 150.

preserving the environment for future generations. As we have seen, if one disregards a truly naive view of the opportunities for civil nuclear energy, Bloch adopts a relatively critical stance in relation to modern technological-industrial civilization. His social utopia is inseparably linked to the dream of a different, co-operative, non-destructive rapport between human beings and nature.

It is not my concern here to question Jonas's critique of Ernst Bloch, particularly since such an enterprise would require a whole book. Just one remark: Jonas accuses Marxists in general and Bloch in particular of anthropocentrism and a lack of sensitivity for the romanticism of nature (*Naturromantik*).[23] As regards the first charge, in all probability Bloch would plead guilty: the "principle of hope" does in fact aim at the happiness of the human race. However, if one considers that this happiness cannot be realized in a damaged natural environment, utopian anthropocentrism or humanism does not conflict with the concern for ecological balance at all—quite the contrary. As regards the second point of criticism, Bloch would reject it without hesitation: of all Marxist thinkers, he is after all undoubtedly the one most strongly characterized by a romantic philosophy of nature.

Bloch's critique of modern technology is motivated above all by the romantic call for a more harmonious relationship to nature. Present-day technology, which he describes as "bourgeois," is characterized merely by a relationship to nature that is basically inimical and determined by market considerations: "Our technology to date stands in nature like an occupying army in enemy territory."[24] Like the intellectuals of the Frankfurt School, the author of *The Principle of Hope* held the view that the "capitalist concept of technology overall" shows, in relation to nature, a will to "domination, the attitude of a slave master."[25] It is not a case of rejecting technology as such, but of opposing the technology that exists in modern society with the utopia of a "technology of alliance," a technology "mediated with the co-productivity of nature,"[26] technology "as the delivery and mediation of creations dormant in the womb of nature"—a formulation that Bloch—as so often without quoting his sources—borrowed from Walter Benjamin.[27]

[23] Jonas, *Das Prinzip Verantwortung*, 370 (omitted in the English version).
[24] Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, 2:814.
[25] Ibid., 2:783.
[26] Ibid., 2:807.
[27] Ibid., 2:813.

This sensibility, which one could call "pre-ecological," is inspired directly by the romantic philosophy of nature, together with its qualitative concept of the natural world. According to Bloch, it is the rise of capitalism, of the value of turnover, and of the calculus of the market economy, that contributes to the "forgetting of the organic" and to the "loss of a sense of quality" in nature." Goethe, Schelling, Franz von Baader, Joseph Molitor, and Hegel are some of the representatives of a return to the qualitative, which developed as a reaction to this forgetting. It was not inappropriate for Jürgen Habermas to describe Ernst Bloch as the "Marxist Schelling," in that he attempted to formulate a unique blend of romantic philosophy of nature and historical materialism.[28]

Ernst Bloch's book *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* appeared in 1959 (the English translation, *The Principle of Hope*, appearing in 1986), and Hans Jonas's book *Das Prinzip Verantwortung* appeared in 1979 (the author's own English version, *The Imperative of Responsibility*, appeared in 1984). Since then, the ecological crisis—a deep crisis of civilization—has become infinitely worse, and on the horizon of the decades to come, the threat of an environmental catastrophe of unforeseeable proportions is becoming apparent. The whole capitalist-industrial civilization—as well as its bureaucratic reflection, which collapsed in 1989—with its furious productivism, are responsible not only for the exponential growth in pollution of the air, soil, and water, but also for the possibly irreversible damage to the ecological system of the planet.

It is no longer solely a matter of the responsibility to future generations that Jonas had in mind, but responsibility for our own generation. The climatic changes that result from the greenhouse effect, for example, are already making themselves felt, and threaten to bring about dramatic consequences for the whole of humanity in the near future. The "imperative of responsibility" must not relate only to "nature" in the abstract sense, but must bear in mind the natural environment of human life: here, anthropocentrism becomes synonymous with humanism. From this perspective, the scientific utopias inspired by the Baconian ideal, which utopias Bloch celebrated in his *magnum opus* in a largely uncritical way,[29] or the economic utopias that are based on the "principle of growth" that aims at unlimited development of production as well as

[28] See Jürgen Habermas, "Ernst Bloch: Ein marxistischer Schelling," in idem, *Philosophisch-politische Profile* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1984), 141–59.
[29] See the fairly dubious passage about "Bacon's *ars inveniendi*" in Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, 2:758–63.

an unlimited increase in consumption, are ethically "irresponsible," because they conflict with the ecological balance of the planet.

Now the half-hearted measures, the ecological reforms, and the intergovernmental conferences have to a large extent demonstrated their limitations and their impotence. Proposals such as the "market for pollution rights" are aimed only at perpetuating the *status quo* for the benefit of the big environmental polluters, above all the United States. How is one to imagine a real, i.e., radical solution to the ecological crisis without changing, from the bottom up, the current forms of production and consumption which are responsible for the glaring injustices and the catastrophic damage? How shall one prevent the increasing damage to the environment without breaking with an economic logic that knows only the law of the market, of profit, and of the accumulation of wealth? How should that be possible without a utopian project of social change, which subjects production to non-economic criteria that are to be determined democratically by society? And how shall one envisage such a project without including—as one of its principal aspects—a new attitude to nature, one that respects the natural environment? The "imperative of responsibility" cannot be reconciled with a cold conservatism that refuses to question the existing economic and social system, and which judges any search for alternatives as "unrealistic."

Far from excluding one another, the two principles—that of hope and that of responsibility—are directly and inseparably connected to one another: they depend on one another and complement one another in a dialectical manner. Without the "imperative of responsibility," utopia can be only destructive, and without the "principle of hope," responsibility is nothing more than a conformist illusion.

CHAPTER EIGHT

ZIONISM, THE HOLOCAUST, AND JUDAISM IN A SECULAR WORLD: NEW PERSPECTIVES ON HANS JONAS'S FRIENDSHIP WITH GERSHOM SCHOLEM AND HANNAH ARENDT

Christian Wiese

While Hans Jonas's work has been neglected in the Anglophone world, in Germany at least (as well as in France, Italy, and Japan), the German-born philosopher's thought is still part of the general philosophical, ethical, and political discourse on the dangers resulting from modern technological power. His book, *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age*,[1] is being considered one of the most important and challenging philosophical responses to the ethical challenges of contemporary science and technology and continues to be discussed as a relevant contribution. What seems to be absent from the reception of Jonas's work is an awareness of the strong links that exist between his philosophical attitude and his biographical experience. An intellectual biography of Jonas that would address these links and pay due attention to the Jewish elements in his life and thought remains a desideratum.[2] All told, the important ethical arguments Hans Jonas formulated in the areas of philosophical biology, ecology, and bioethics represent only one aspect of a career rooted in the vicissitudes of the twentieth century and the experience of German Jewry. It is well known that along with Karl Löwith, Hannah Arendt, and Emmanuel Levinas, Jonas was one of Martin Heidegger's foremost Jewish students during

[1] Hans Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age*, trans. Hans Jonas with David Herr (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984); German original, *Das Prinzip Verantwortung: Versuch einer Technik für die technologische Zivilisation* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1979).

[2] As a first approach to such a biography, see Christian Wiese, *The Life and Thought of Hans Jonas: Jewish Dimensions* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2007).

the Weimar Republic,[3] writing his famous work on *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist* under his supervision and intellectual influence. It is also quite well known that later, profoundly shocked by Heidegger's behavior during the Nazi period and by what he perceived as the "philosophical catastrophe" this reflected, Jonas distanced himself from Heidegger's ideas, abandoned his research on Gnosticism, and proceeded to develop an anti-existentialist, anti-nihilist biology-centered philosophy that would become the basis of his approach to ethics.[4] It is less known, however, that Jonas was a convinced Zionist from his early youth onward—a position reflected in his leaving Germany immediately in 1933, moving in 1935 to Palestine, where he joined a circle of German-Jewish intellectuals in Jerusalem, and serving in the British Army between 1939 and 1945 for the sake of fighting Nazism. At the same time, throughout his adult life, Jonas, always painfully aware of his mother's murder in Auschwitz, wrestled with the Holocaust's religious and philosophical implications for Judaism in general.

Both Jonas's Zionism and his later speculations on what he referred to as "the concept of God after Auschwitz" deserve a more detailed analysis.[5] Jonas's recently published memoirs, a testimony to the German-Jewish experience before and during the Holocaust and a most interesting example of *Exilliteratur*,[6] are a key to understanding the relation of his biography in general, and his political convictions in particular, to his philosophical thinking. These memoirs reinforce a sense that, although Jonas's rejection of efforts to define him as a Jewish philosopher were well grounded, it is also the case that the Jewish dimension of his work should not be underestimated.

One reason why his *Erinnerungen* make for such fascinating reading lies no doubt in the intensity, respect, and affection characterizing the stories he tells of his encounters with prominent friends. Jonas's memoirs impressively show his distinct gift for friendship, though this gift

[3] See Richard Wolin, *Heidegger's Children: Hannah Arendt, Karl Löwith, Hans Jonas, and Herbert Marcuse* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

[4] See Wiese, *The Life and Thought of Hans Jonas*, 87–102.

[5] For Jonas's Zionism, see Christian Wiese, "Abschied vom deutschen Judentum. Zionismus und Kampf um die Würde im politischen Denken des frühen Hans Jonas," in *Weiterwohnlichkeit der Welt: Zur Aktualität von Hans Jonas*, ed. Christian Wiese and Eric Jacobson (Berlin: Philo-Verlag, 2003), 15–33; and Wiese, *The Life and Thought of Hans Jonas*, 1–33. For Jonas's theological speculations, see ibid., 120–49.

[6] See Hans Jonas, *Erinnerungen*, based on conversations with Rachel Salamander, ed. Christian Wiese (Frankfurt am Main: Insel-Verlag, 2003).

did not prevent him from honestly addressing critical issues and even passionately entering into conflict, if necessary, when his sense of self and his convictions were at stake. But even where friendships ceased due to personal or intellectual alienation, private letters illustrate how he was able to do justice to the respective friend and to treasure the bonds that had once existed, often with sadness about the loss this entailed. A telling example of this is his relationship to Leo Strauss, with whom he had shared an intense friendship in Germany, in the days of their exile in London, and even after the war in the U.S.[7] However, their intellectual paths developed in different directions, and they lost sight of each other while Jonas was in New York at the New School for Social Research and Strauss at the University of Chicago. Despite this alienation, Jonas always remembered this friendship with gratitude, which he expressed after Strauss's death in 1973 in a letter of condolence to his wife, Miriam:

> I was once bonded to Leo in friendship, since my student years. Zionism led us together, and later philosophy brought us much closer to each other. As a young student I looked up to him; he looked after me as it is in his beautiful nature, and we became and stayed friends for many years, only interrupted by geography.... Unforgettable is the time we spent in London, where we came closer than ever before or later on.... Conversations with Leo Strauss belong to the most significant moments of my life. I was the one who received. Already then his intellectual superiority was clear to me, and this never changed. I owe him very much both philosophically, as so many others, and with respect to my external biography.... The later alienation, whose reasons never became clear to me, was painful for me, but it never diminished the high regard and admiration for his spirit, nor the affection for his person.... I should certainly have attempted more strongly to reestablish contact, instead of allowing myself to be discouraged by a few failures. Now it is too late for all the missed opportunities. But maybe not too late to make a confession regarding Leo's greatness, my indebtedness to him, as well as my friendship with him and you that neither time nor separation can harm. I mourn for him. The world is poorer without him.[8]

Jonas's personal relationships were by no means restricted solely to Jews. His most intimate friendships with non-Jewish intellectuals were,

[7] See Jonas, *Erinnerungen*, 92–95 and 261–62.

[8] Hans Jonas to Miriam Strauss, undated handwritten draft (after October 18, 1973), Hans Jonas papers, Philosophical Archives of the University of Konstanz, HJ 9–6–4. A thorough analysis of the intellectual relationship between both thinkers is still a desideratum.

among others, those with his teacher, the Protestant theologian Rudolf Bultmann, and the political scientist and publicist Dolf Sternberger. Nonetheless, it appears as a natural consequence of Jonas's life path that his closest and most interesting friendships were with intellectuals who played a seminal role in the history of German-Jewish emigration to Palestine and the United States—figures such as Günther Anders, Karl Löwith, Leo Strauss, George Lichtheim, Ernst Simon, Shmuel Sambursky, Martin Buber, and Adolph Lowe, among others. A future intellectual biography will have to explore in more detail what impact these relations hips had on his life and thought. Within the limited context of this article, however, his relations to Gershom Scholem and Hannah Arendt deserve special attention, for those friendships clearly presented the greatest challenge to Jonas's efforts to clarify his own understanding of both Judaism and Zionism. Yet, neither one of these friendships was spared a dramatic crisis of one kind or another, crises that proved revealing for Jonas's understanding of himself as a Jew. The following pages attempt to analyze the character of Jonas's friendship with Scholem and Arendt,[9] drawing upon a wealth of previously unpublished letters and texts that shed light on his relationship to Zionism, as well as on previously unknown facets of his life, including the debates which he conducted with his friends on such subjects as Zionism, the Holocaust, and the fate of Jewish life in the twentieth century.

I

Hans Jonas's relationship with Gershom Scholem was grounded in a set of common historical experiences that began in childhood and youth, over a period extending from the First World War to the early Weimar Republic. Their relationship would be marked by shared ideological convictions (both embraced a post-assimilationist attitude that made them reject German Jewry's hopes of full integration) and scholarly endeavors: a growing disillusion with the prospects of Jewish

[9] For a more comprehensive interpretation, including the relevant sources, see Wiese, *The Life and Thought of Hans Jonas*, 34–86; Christian Wiese, "Mysterium jüdischer Existenz und umstrittene Erinnerung. Hans Jonas und Hannah Arendt—Impressionen einer Freundschaft," in *Memoria: Wege jüdischen Erinnerns*, ed. Birgit E. Klein and Christiane E. Müller (Berlin: Metropol, 2005), 733–52; Christian Wiese, "'For a Time I Was Privileged to Enjoy His Friendship . . .': The Ambivalent Relation between Hans Jonas and Gershom Scholem," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 49 (2004): 25–58.

integration into Germany which resulted in a Zionist commitment on the part of both Scholem and Jonas, as well as a strong interest by both in Jewish religious history. Jonas first encountered Scholem in the early 1920s, during a turbulent meeting of the Zionist youth movement in Berlin. Already then, Jonas perceived Scholem, in his later words, as a "tremendously stubborn, original personality deeply permeated by intellectual motivation."[10] Shortly thereafter, Scholem emigrated to Jerusalem. Jonas had meanwhile completed several months of agricultural work with the Hakhsharah organization—a Zionist organization that provided agricultural training for young Jews willing to join the Yishuv, the Jewish settlements in Palestine—in order to prepare himself for immediate emigration to Palestine; but having decided that he was much more suited for intellectual than for agricultural work, he decided to finish his studies in Marburg. During that time, it was especially Martin Buber's cultural Zionism and his diagnosis of the deep ambiguity of Jewish existence in the Diaspora, as well as his plea for an awareness of the spiritual and ethical values of the Jewish people, that influenced him deeply. While we do not have any political statements with regard to Zionist ideology and practice written by Jonas, an interesting essay (published in 1922 in the journal *Der jüdische Student*) allows a glimpse at the political implications of his Zionist reading of the Hebrew Bible. In this religious-historical justification of Zionism, Jonas deplored the "night of the galut [Diaspora]" and implicitly attacked the typical Reform Jewish concept of the Diaspora as an opportunity for a universal "mission of Judaism," confronting it with the prophetic promise of an end of exile and a future restoration of the people of Israel. Connecting these prophetic visions with Theodor Herzl's agenda of establishing a "Jewish state," Jonas claimed that it was necessary for European Jews, in a time of increasing anti-Semitism, to take their destiny into their own hands and to finally become political subjects instead of objects of the vicissitudes of European politics.[11]

After the collapse of the Weimar Republic, recognizing the political potential of anti-Semitism in Germany and the threat posed by the Nazis, Jonas left his home country in August 1933 for England, where he intended to prepare for publication his book on Gnosticism. He

[10] Jonas, *Erinnerungen*, 97.

[11] Hans Jonas, "Die Idee der Zerstreuung und Wiedersammlung bei den Propheten," *Der jüdische Student* 4 (1922): 30–43, here 30.

contacted Scholem from London, asking him for a letter of recommendation in support of an application for a British fellowship. Scholem complied, and it seems from his recommendation that he appreciated Jonas's interpretation of Gnosticism—he praised Jonas as a gifted scholar, but not without taking note of the latter's failure to have yet read his, Scholem's, work. This is the first manifestation of a lifelong bone of contention between the two scholars.[12]

After having finished his research in London's libraries, Jonas, who possessed an immigration certificate for Palestine, eventually left Europe, arriving in Jerusalem in April 1935, on the eve of Pesach. He immediately joined the circle of German Jewish intellectuals at the Hebrew University, where its president, Hugo S. Bergman, offered him the opportunity to teach occasional courses in philosophy. Soon he and Scholem entered into a friendship, facilitated by regular Sabbath meetings of a small scholarly group he organized together with the Orientalist Hans J. Polotsky and the philologist Hans Lewy. They called their circle "Pil," an acronym composed of their last names' Hebrew initials, and the first meeting seems to have taken place shortly after Jonas's arrival. Joining the circle that same year, Scholem promptly demanded that its name be changed; he suggested "Pilegesh"—the Hebrew word for a concubine who, in ancient biblical culture, enjoyed the same rights in the house as the legitimate wife. Other important scholars, including the physicist Shmuel Sambursky, gradually joined the "Pilegesh" circle, which met until the early 1940s. We have been left with a scattering of poems written by various members to describe each other—these suggest that the circle did not only discuss serious matters.[13] Correspondingly, the friendship between Jonas and Scholem was apparently founded not only on mutual respect, but also on a great deal of humor. In his memoirs Jonas recalls that in 1939, for the first time in his life, he made a bet on a historical question. When

[12] The recommendation letter and the Jonas-Scholem correspondence are located in the papers of Gershom Scholem at the Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem, JNUL 401599 (henceforth Scholem papers: unless otherwise indicated, all cited correspondence between Scholem and Jonas belongs to that collection). The documents are published in Wiese, *The Life and Thought of Hans Jonas*, 37–40.

[13] For the founding and the character of the "Pilegesh" circle as well as the humorous poems its members dedicated to each other, see Jonas, *Erinnerungen*, 150–61. On the history of the circle, see Noam Zadoff, "'Mit Witz in Ernst und Ernst in Witz'—Der Jerusalemer PILEGESH-Kreis,'" in *Jüdischer Almanach: Humor*, ed. Gisela Dachs (Frankfurt am Main: Jüdischer Verlag, 2004), 50–60.

the "Pilegesh" circle turned to the question of whether England and France would keep their promise and defend Poland against a German assault, the general consensus—which included Scholem—was that they would certainly fail to do so.

> Then I made a bet with Scholem, who loved betting. As he loved sweets, too, he demanded a pound of marzipan or chocolate in case he won, while I would receive a roasted duck prepared by Fanya Scholem, whom he had married in the meantime.... I had met her after moving to Jerusalem; she was still Fanya Freud then, and everybody told me she was a wonderful girl. She was not very attractive but she had a great personality and was a brilliant Hebraist.... People had different ideas about who would finally marry her, but in the end it was Scholem. At the time of our bet, they had already been married for a couple of years and Fanya was, as it were, part of the bet, because she would owe me a roast duck. It is well known who won the bet: me—England did not fail. In the meantime I was serving in the army, and while on leave I was invited for dinner by the Scholems. However, I felt cheated of my prize since they had invited a number of other friends and my piece of the roasted duck was not really very big.[14]

Scholem and Jonas agreed on most of the important political issues discussed in Palestine at the time. Both were members of the *Brith Shalom* movement, which supported the establishment of a bi-national (Jewish-Arab) state in Palestine.[15] Jonas does appear to have been more concerned with the security of the Yishuv, since he soon became an active member of the Jewish self-defence movement, the Haganah. Most importantly, the two men agreed on the urgency of fighting against Nazi Germany. In September 1939, Jonas composed a passionately formulated text entitled "Unsere Teilnahme an diesem Kriege" ("Our Participation in This War"); this was presented on October 6, 1939, in Gustav Krojanker's house in Jerusalem to a group of like-minded friends, including Gershom Scholem, Georg Landauer, Max Kreutzberger, Robert Weltsch, and others. In this text, Jonas called for the establishment of a Jewish army, and for all young Palestinian Jews to fight against the "principle of Nazism." This principle, he declared, was fundamentally opposed to Judaism, which was an embodiment of

[14] Jonas, *Erinnerungen*, 164.

[15] On this circle, see Hagit Lavsky, "German Zionists and the Emergence of Brit Shalom," in *Essential Papers on Zionism*, ed. Jehuda Reinharz and Anita Shapira (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 648–70; and Shalom Ratzabi, *Between Zionism and Judaism: The Radical Circle in Brith Shalom, 1925–1933* (Leiden: Brill, 2002).

humanism and the strongest ally of Western culture; if Jews did not fight the Germans and their "cult of power and contempt of humanity," German hatred would end in the annihilation of the Jewish people.[16]

Although Scholem expressed strong support for Jonas's position, he did not immediately draw identical personal conclusions. Jonas volunteered to join the British Army, postponing his academic goals in order to fight against the Nazis. On September 7, 1939 he wrote the following letter to the supreme command of the British forces in Palestine:

> In view of the fact that the British Empire is now engaged in a war against Nazi Germany which is bound to last to quote the words of the Prime Minister "till Hitlerism is destroyed," as a Palestinian and former German Jew I am eager to take up arms against the enemy of my people and not only to assist the British Forces in Palestine but to fight as a soldier on the Western front in Europe. I should be grateful to you if you would let me know where I am to enlist for military training.[17]

That same month, Jonas became a member of the British Army's First Palestine Anti-Aircraft Battery and, for several years, participated in defending Haifa's oil refineries against airstrikes by Vichy troops from Lebanon and Syria; later he was stationed in Cyprus. In 1943, Jonas would become a member of the newly established Jewish Brigade Group within the British Army. In this capacity, he would participate in the campaign against Mussolini in Italy and, in 1945, march into Germany.[18] There, in the country of his birth, upbringing, and humanistic education, he discovered that his mother had been murdered in Auschwitz.[19] In a letter to Scholem written from Germany, Jonas emphasized the importance he attached to his involvement in the war against Hitler, despite the personal sacrifice he had made: "Now that everything lies behind me and I am looking back upon things, I am able to say, at full peace with myself, that I don't regret what I have done. If the same situation should occur again... I would do the same thing."[20]

[16] See the complete text in the appendix to this article. For a thorough interpretation of the text, its political context, and its importance for an understanding of Jonas's later philosophy, see Wiese, *The Life and Thought of Hans Jonas*, 13–33.

[17] Hans Jonas papers, Philosophical Archives of the University of Konstanz, HJ 13–40–37.

[18] See Jonas, *Erinnerungen*, 208–14; on the history of the brigade, see Morris Beckman, *The Jewish Brigade: An Army with Two Masters*, 1944–45 (Staplehurst: Spellmount, 1998).

[19] See Jonas, *Erinnerungen*, 215–22.

[20] Jonas to Scholem, June 20, 1945.

The friendship between Hans Jonas and Gershom Scholem remained strong throughout the war: several sources point to a profound emotional and intellectual relationship based on the encounter of two strong characters and a common interest in Gnosticism and early Jewish mysticism. Still, a close look at this evidence also points to a certain distance, perhaps reflected in the fact that Jonas and Scholem never address each other with the familiar *du* but maintain the formal *Sie* throughout their correspondence. In 1942 Scholem presented Jonas with a copy of his recently published *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* and included the following handwritten dedication in German: "For my Gnostic colleague / as a warning accompaniment / when he descends further / into the depths of the void / a small treatise / about mysticism and dialectics / dedicated in friendship / by the analytic and unanalyzed author.— G. Scholem, Jerusalem, 8.3.1942." On January 15, 1943, while Jonas's unit was stationed near Haifa, Scholem sent him a second copy with another dedication and a poem containing a cautious confession with regard to the ambiguous effect on his personal thinking of his scholarly research on Jewish mysticism. With its expression of loneliness, alienation, and indeed suffering in the face of the strange religious worlds he was treating, this poem offered Jonas a rare look into Scholem's normally hidden inner life:

> I threw myself into ancient books,
> I was awestruck by their signs.
> I spent too much time alone with them.
> I could no longer leave them behind.
>
> The glimmer of truth is ancient,
> Yet disaster is unforeseen:
> Generations are weakly linked,
> And knowledge is not clean.
>
> I have brought back the blurred face
> Of the Fullness of time.
> I was ready to leap into the abyss,
> But was I really primed?
>
> The ancestral symbols are here explained;
> The Kabbalist was no dope,
> But what transformed time proposes
> Remains foreign, beyond our scope.
>
> Time transformed casts us a fearsome glance,
> For it is unwilling to turn back again.
> Yet abandoned joys grow palpable
> Once your Vision has dissolved in pain.

(To Hans Jonas, my Gnostic colleague, for him to heed when descending into the depths of nothingness and when ascending into the even more unknown, presented in friendship by Gerhard Scholem.)[21]

Jonas responded in a rather agitated letter of thanks dated 4 February 1943, sent from Haifa, in which, along with expressing profound thanks for the personal confession expressed in this poem, he spoke of his suffering in view of the aloofness that usually characterized Scholem and the way the latter used to hide his real thoughts and feelings behind a scholarly mask.[22] Unfortunately, as some of Scholem's letters to Jonas from this period are lost, we do not know whether he responded to Jonas's letter. Nor do we know whether there was, for instance, a subsequent deepening dialogue between Jonas and Scholem concerning the personal dimension of research on Jewish history and traditions, or if this letter marked a culmination of shared confidentiality. It seems, however, that the degree of frankness and emotional openness expressed in both Scholem's dedication and Jonas's letter of thanks is unique in the history of their friendship.

At the same time the two texts illustrate what Jonas means when, in his *Erinnerungen*, he ponders the "unsolved enigma of Scholem": the question posed by all his Jerusalem friends, namely whether "Scholem himself had a relationship of faith with Judaism": "What did he believe? How much did he want to believe but could not believe? He has never expressed himself clearly with respect to this question."[23] Jonas's confusion with respect to Scholem's personal relationship to Judaism and the Jewish religion, beyond his Zionism and his immersion in the history and literature of Jewish mysticism, corresponds precisely to Joseph Dan's observation that even in his autobiographical writings Scholem was most reluctant to display personal motivations and feelings.[24] What Jonas describes in his letter as Scholem's "secrecy"—at

[21] A copy of the two dedications is located in the Scholem papers. The English translation is taken from Gershom Scholem, *The Fullness of Time: Poems*, trans. Richard Sieburth, introduced and annotated by Steven M. Wasserstrom (Jerusalem: Ibis Editions, 2003), 109–11. For an interpretation of Scholems poems, see Sigrid Weigel, "Scholem's Gedichte und seine Dichtungstheorie: Klage, Adressierung, Gabe, und das Problem einer biblischen Sprache in unserer Zeit," in *Gershom Scholem: Literatur und Rhetorik*, ed. Stéphane Mosès and Sigrid Weigel (Cologne: Böhlau, 2000), 16–47.

[22] Jonas to Scholem, February 4, 1943; see the full text in Wiese, *The Life and Thought of Hans Jonas*, 44–45.

[23] Jonas, *Erinnerungen*, 270.

[24] Joseph Dan, *Gershom Scholem and the Mystical Dimension of Jewish History* (New York: New York University Press, 1987), 5–16.

least partially abandoned in his poem, with its references to a personal religious search, a fascination with mystical texts and a concomitant disillusionment with and estrangement from mysticism—has itself been interpreted by later critics as revealing confusion with respect to the relation between religious traditions and secular modernity. What is clear is that Scholem's devotion to the study of Jewish mysticism was inspired by a rejection of assimilation and a correspondingly strong sense of the neglect suffered by the irrational, mystical currents within Jewish tradition. Scholem appears to have become increasingly intrigued by the subject of his research, although without having developed mystical inclinations of his own. Apart from his agenda of making the Kabbalah intellectually respectable as one legitimate voice within Judaism among a variety of others, at last equal to the legal and rational traditions, it is clear that it was not just an historical phenomenon for him. Rather, it implied solutions to the religious and philosophical problems of Judaism in modernity.[25]

In trying to come to grips with such a complex personal and intellectual position, scholars have tended to oscillate between the opinion that Scholem perceived the Kabbalah in a completely detached way, that is, as a strictly historical phenomenon, and the opinion voiced by Theodor W. Adorno, according to whom "the mystical spark [must have] ignited in [Scholem] himself,"[26] and by Ernst Simon, according to whom Scholem's silence with regard to God implied a hidden confession of faith, a kind of "indirect communication."[27] Scholem would only directly address the implicit ambivalence of his own attitude in his later essays and interviews. In a biographical interview he gave in 1973–1974 to Muki Tsur, he described himself as a religious (as opposed to an atheistic) anarchist[28] who did not believe in a Torah handed down to Moses on Sinai. Scholem similarly distanced himself from atheism,

[25] For the development of Scholem's interpretation of Jewish mysticism, see David Biale, *Kabbalah and Counterhistory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), especially 113–27; and Eliezer Schweid, *Judaism and Mysticism according to Gershom Scholem: A Critical Analysis and Programmatic Discussion* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1985).

[26] Theodor W. Adorno, "Gruß an Gershom G. Scholem. Zum 70. Geburtstag," in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, December 2, 1967.

[27] Ernst Simon, "Über einige theologische Sätze von Gershom Scholem," *Mitteilungsblatt des Irgun Olej Merkas Europa*, December 8, 1972, 3–5; and December 15, 1972, 4–6.

[28] "With Gershom Scholem: An Interview," in Gershom Scholem, *On Jews and Judaism in Crisis*, ed. Werner J. Dannhauser (New York: Schocken Books, 1976), 1–48, here 35.

indicating that he did not even consider himself a secularist: "My secularism fails right at the core, owing to the fact that I am a religious person, because I am sure of my belief in God. My secularism is not secular." Despite his strictly historical approach to Jewish mysticism, he said, he shared the fundamental feeling of the Kabbalists "that there is a mystery—a secret—in the world."[29]

Without of course being intended as such, the following statement of Scholem regarding the relation between faith and scholarship in his research on Jewish mysticism sounds like a belated response to Jonas's own reaction to the poem Scholem had dedicated to him:

> The fact that I addressed myself to Kabbalah not merely as a chapter of history but from a dialectical distance—from [a point of] identification and distance at the same time—might stem from the fact that I had the feeling that Kabbalah had a living center, that it expressed itself in a way appropriate to that generation, but that in another form it could perhaps have said something else in another generation. Something unknown of this sort must have motivated me beyond all the philological games and masquerades at which I excel. I can understand that something of this sort inspired my secularist listeners the way it inspired me.[30]

There is no evidence that Scholem ever formulated such a response, conceding "games and masquerades," in personal exchanges with Jonas. It is actually not at all clear whether Scholem and Jonas, after cautiously touching on religion, faith, doubt, secularism, and modernity, ever continued a conversation on such topics, and indeed whether Jonas ever read Scholem's later texts. But Scholem's essay of 1974 entitled "Reflections on Jewish Theology" does display a strikingly strong affinity with Jonas's theological thinking.[31] Despite occasionally different emphases, and although Scholem could rely on an incomparably greater degree of Jewish knowledge, both he and Jonas were concerned with the loss of tradition's authority, the relevance of Judaism in a secularized technological world, and the meaning of the Holocaust for Jewish thought. And Scholem and Jonas came to remarkably similar conclusions.

In the first place, both scholars felt a strong but sometimes ambiguous commitment to Judaism. Despite his strong sense of Jewish identity rooted in his Zionist convictions, Jonas did not want to be understood

[29] Ibid., 46 and 48.
[30] Ibid., 46 (translation slightly modified).
[31] For a more detailed interpretation, see Wiese, *The Life and Work of Hans Jonas*, 152–60.

as a Jewish philosopher; rather, he explains in his memoirs that his intellectual relationship to Judaism was "as ambiguous as probably the relation of any modern contemporary Jew to the Jewish heritage, at least if he does not simply abandon and forget it"[32] and that he felt it difficult to reconcile his religious convictions with his general philosophical world view. However, he emphasizes, he felt deeply committed to what he characterizes as the "unique, enigmatic, mysterious, and binding" aspect in Jewish history;[33] in a very emotional passage, he refers to a "mystery" that binds all Jews together, "beyond the time-bound, private, personal positions" that they adopt in practice and in their conscious acts.[34] This passage has an obvious similarity to Scholem's statement "that there is a mystery—a secret—in the world"; it is perhaps Jonas's clearest and most personal description of his attitude toward Judaism. Beyond Jonas's ambiguity, it points to his sharing with Scholem of the *ambivalence* felt by many secular Jewish intellectuals regarding traditional Jewish rituals and patterns of faith: an ambivalence to which they sometimes responded by developing personal forms of Jewish identity and personal ideas of Jewish relevance. Jonas's motif of "mystery" seems to aim at a transcendent dimension that demands reverence and responsibility. For his part, Scholem indicates in his "Reflections on Jewish Theology" that, although rejecting atheism, he does not belong to those fortunate people with a "positive theology of an inflexible Judaism";[35] he ponders over the tension existing in his view between secular modernity, with its philological and historical approach to Jewish history and literature, and the claim staked by Jewish tradition to an authority rooted in revelation, between scholarly research and the notion of the "Torah as the absolute word."[36]

From Scholem's perspective, traditional Jewish religion has lost its binding character; but he considers belief in God's existence to be unaffected by this loss of authority, since Judaism can "be regarded as entirely independent of Revelation"—for example in the acceptance of the idea of the creation of the world by God "out of nothing."[37] In modern times, he maintains, the affirmation of God's existence,

[32] Jonas, *Erinnerungen*, 339.
[33] Ibid., 340.
[34] Ibid., 341.
[35] Gershom Scholem, "Reflections on Jewish Theology," in Scholem, *On Jews and Judaism*, 261–97, here 261.
[36] Ibid., 271.
[37] Ibid., 276–77.

and the religious and moral consequences of this, have often been translated into philosophical convictions. These possess "the value of provocations which may perhaps prove themselves indissoluble in the melting pot of modern nihilism and full of future possibilities."[38] This observation would appear to correspond quite closely to Jonas's sense of a Jewish-Christian continuum within Western philosophy.[39] It also seems to share the hope embedded in Jonas's religious philosophy that despite secularism, the philosophical plausibility of central elements of the Jewish faith—especially the notion of the sanctity of life and the creation of man in the image of God—still have the power to oppose nihilistic worldviews: to establish an ethic of responsibility in an age stamped, as a result of human technological power, by threats to earthly life itself.[40]

In the second place, Jonas and Scholem share a critical approach to Jewish messianism. In his *Imperative of Responsibility* Jonas offers a strong critique of Ernst Bloch's utopian thinking, which he condemns as irresponsible: such thinking, he argues, involves a fantasy menacing an urgently needed politics of humility and technological self-restriction—hence potentially menacing human life itself.[41] Jonas entirely rejected messianism since he understood it as an attempt to escape a necessary acknowledgment of the ambiguity, fragility, and radical mortality of human life.[42] Whenever Jonas links his own ethics to Jewish thinking, he thus draws not on concepts of messianism and redemption but on that of creation and the sanctity of life. In contrast, Gershom Scholem devoted much space and thought to the phenomenon of Jewish messianism, which he appreciated as an important, driving element within Jewish tradition;[43] at the same time, in the framework of that

[38] Ibid., 276.

[39] See Hans Jonas, "Jewish and Christian Elements in the Western Philosophical Tradition," in *Commentary* 44 (1974): 61–68.

[40] As an example of Jonas's effort to ground his ethics of responsibility in Jewish values, see Hans Jonas, "Contemporary Problems in Ethics from a Jewish Perspective," *CCAR Journal* 15 (1968): 27–39.

[41] Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility*, 178–204; see Michael Löwy's contribution in this volume

[42] Hans Jonas, "The Burden and Blessing of Mortality," in Hans Jonas, *Mortality and Morality: A Search for the Good after Auschwitz*, ed. Lawrence Vogel (Evanson, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 87–98; and "Immortality and the Modern Temper," in ibid., 115–30.

[43] See, for example, several of the contributions in Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971).

appreciation, he spelled out his sense of that messianism's political dangers in a now-famous passage:

> Little wonder that overtones of Messianism have accompanied the modern Jewish readiness for irrevocable action in the concrete realm, when it set out on the utopian return to Zion. This readiness no longer allows itself to be fed on hopes. Born out of the horror and destruction that was Jewish history in our own generation, it is bound to history itself and not to meta-history; it has not given itself up totally to Messianism. Whether or not Jewish history will be able to endure this entry into the concrete realm without perishing in the crisis of the Messianic claim, which has virtually been conjured up, that is the question which out of his great and dangerous past the Jew of this age poses to his present and to his future.[44]

Scholem also voiced a skepticism regarding secular, utopian, and apocalyptic forms of Jewish messianism in general, in a manner appearing to echo Jonas's own preoccupations:

> It is one of the peculiarities of the present age that the idea of Redemption, either in its pure form or in its secularized metamorphoses, has been maintained much more vigorously in the mind of wide circles than, for instance, the idea of Creation. The very people who talk most loudly about Redemption and its implication are often enough those who want to hear least of Creation. Yet no Jewish theology whatever can renounce the doctrine that the world is a creation—as a one-time event or as a continual always self-renewing process.... The Jewish faith in God as Creator will maintain its place, beyond all images and myths, when it is a matter of choosing an alternative: the world as a Creation and the world as something that creates itself by chance.[45]

Jonas would certainly have endorsed Scholem's insistence that "God as Creator" is much more important than "God in his capacity as Revealer or Redeemer" and that it would be possible "to imagine a theology in which the only Revelation is the Creation itself."[46] Still, a certain difference with Jonas emerges when Scholem insists on the need, in response to the challenges of modern technology and modern nihilism, for a specifically religious ethics of creation. Jonas had argued similarly in lectures to Jewish audiences in the United States; but later, apparently from a sense that he had to convince a secular generation out of touch with religious thinking, he attempted to provide a universal

[44] Gershom Scholem, "Toward an Understanding of the Messianic Idea," in ibid., 1–36, here 36.

[45] Scholem, "Reflections on Jewish Theology," 277.

[46] Ibid., 279.

philosophical foundation for his responsibility-centered ethics, omitting any reference to the concept of the "sanctity of life."[47]

Scholem's strong emphasis on the opposition between religious and secular ethics left little space for Jonas's effort to establish an ethical system based on an inner teleology of nature. Jonas, on the basis of his "philosophy of life," postulated a non-religious foundation for the "sanctity of life," claiming that humanity had to "learn fear and trembling again and, even without God, a respect for the sacred."[48] Without necessarily knowing this text, Scholem explicitly contradicted Jonas's conviction: "The secularizing talk of the 'sanctity of life' is a squaring of the circle. It smuggles an absolute value into a world which could never have formed it out of its own resources, a value pointing surreptitiously to a teleology of Creation which is, after all, disavowed by a purely naturalistic rationalistic view of the world."[49] This philosophical difference between the two men notwithstanding, Jonas would certainly have agreed with Scholem's conviction that religion could play an important role in a "technological world" in which humanity often appeared "a helpless instrument of overpowering forces, and at the same time atomized and isolated, standing unprotected in the face of the loneliness and senselessness which oppress and suffocate him."[50] Confronted with what they perceived as a science-engendered loss of the sense of a magical cosmos and even of the value of human life, both Jonas and Scholem hoped to reinvigorate conceptual categories tied to reverence, sanctity, and mystery: Jonas through his personal faith in a Creator who has relinquished his power (as expressed in his reflections upon post-Holocaust theology; Scholem through both the stress he laid on the basic sensibility of Jewish mysticism and his warning not to lose that sensibility.[51]

[47] Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility*, 22–25. For a discussion of the relationship between secular and Jewish elements in Jonas's ethics, see my article "'God's Adventure with the World' and 'Sanctity of Life': Theological Speculations and Ethical Reflections in Jonas's Philosophy after Auschwitz," in this volume.

[48] Hans Jonas, "Mikroben, Gameten, und Zygoten: Weiteres zur neuen Schöpferrolle des Menschen," in Hans Jonas, *Technik, Medizin, und Ethik: Zur Praxis des Prinzips Verantwortung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1985), 204–18, here 218.

[49] Scholem, "Reflections on Jewish Theology," 290.

[50] Ibid., 291.

[51] See, for example, Scholem, "With Gershom Scholem: An Interview," 48.

Finally, there are striking parallels between the concept of God held by Jonas and Scholem, which in both cases revolves around the crucial idea of Creation. Both men felt deeply challenged, morally, intellectually, personally, by the Holocaust and were convinced that traditional Jewish theology did not provide any real response to what it signified. In 1984, two years after Scholem's death, Jonas delivered his famous lecture "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," dedicated to his murdered mother. The Holocaust, he maintained, had destroyed traditional theological concepts, in particular that of a powerful God acting in history. In place of such a historical agent, he suggested the presence of a divine being who, for the sake of human freedom, had relinquished his power at some point in the evolutionary process: in other words, a powerless, suffering God who was himself at risk of experiencing the failure and destruction of his creation, incapable of intervening in human affairs, entirely dependent on human responsibility.[52] Now unmistakably, in his attempt to justify his views on the basis of Jewish tradition, Jonas was relying on Scholem's detailed, deeply influential description of Lurianic Kabbalah, and especially his analysis of the concept of *tzimtzum* at work in that mystic system.[53] But Jonas, making use of his own speculative, evolution-centered myth, radicalized the idea of God's self-limitation in the process of creation, divesting it of its Messianic elements in order to accentuate the creator's utter powerlessness and humanity's radical responsibility for God's "world-adventure": the project of life created by a God endangered by his own creation.

From his deeply informed historical perspective, Scholem would probably have been highly critical of such a variation on Lurianic Kabbalah. In his "Reflections on Jewish Theology," he did concede that "in the face of the concrete experience of the Hitler years—which affected our lives as Jews in such an overwhelming, unfathomable manner, and in one which basically is probably unthinkable as well," the "existential situation" facing Jews had completely changed, so that

[52] Jonas, *Mortality and Morality*, 131–43.

[53] See Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (Jerusalem: Schocken, 1941), 240–82. Jonas explicitly refers to Scholem: "The mighty undercurrent of the Kabbalah, which Gershom Scholem in our days has brought to light anew, knows about a divine fate bound up with the coming-to-be of a world. There we meet highly original, very unorthodox speculations in whose company mine would not appear so wayward after all. Thus, for example, my myth at bottom only pushes further the idea of the tzimtzum, that cosmogonic centerconcept of the Lurianic Kabbalah"; see Jonas, "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," 142.

Jewish tradition can no longer be written in unbroken continuity.[54] And like Jonas, Scholem regards with strong skepticism all the discussions about God's omnipotence and divine providence, which stand in "sharpest contradiction with the human freedom of moral decision," the principle upon which the "moral world of Judaism" must stand and fall.[55] Of all the teachings in Jewish thought, omnipotence is for Scholem the least inspiring for modern times, especially after the events of the twentieth century.

In this context, Scholem cites the tradition of Lurianic Kabbalah, in order to emphasize that its world view, including the Messianic idea of *tikkun olam*, had been completely destroyed by the Holocaust. However, in an implicit contrast to the radicalizing interpretation espoused by Jonas, Scholem does *not* interpret the concept of *tzimtzum* as involving God turning away from affairs of the human world; rather, he sees it as articulating a hope in divine providence and for the world's permanent re-creation and renewal. As Scholem describes it, *tzimtzum* was precisely not conceived as a single and definite self-limiting act at the start of creation, but as a perpetually self-creating process in which "again and again a stream streams into the void, a 'something' of God."[56] He emphasizes its character as a Gnostic drama of redemption—"a drama of failure and reconstruction, but one needed to achieve what had been seminal in it and had never existed before. Here Redemption was not only the goal of history, which thus gave it meaning, but the goal of the whole universe as such."[57] This differing religious-historical perspective clearly shows how much Jonas—very consciously—sought to philosophically reinterpret the idea of human participation in completing the Creation, an idea whose goal, from the point of view of Lurianic Kabbalah, was the redemption of humanity from cosmic exile. Jonas's reinterpretation allowed him to use this idea as a foundation of his assumption that human beings were responsible for a God divested of all power and utterly incapable of redeeming the world. Scholem would have perceived this as a distortion of Lurianic Kabbalah. Yet, eventually Scholem too, though with a different accent, came to a similar conclusion as regards the concept of a powerful God. He assumed

[54] Scholem, "Reflections on Jewish Theology," 262.
[55] Ibid., 281.
[56] Ibid., 283.
[57] Ibid., 285.

that the view of the world expressed in the Lurianic Kabbalah (with its rather optimistic overtones regarding God's continuing power to intervene) had been irrevocably shattered. If the kabbalistic concept of *tzimtzum* was not precisely aiming at the idea of God's total renunciation of power in the world, if it rather sought to maintain hope in God's providence and in the constant renewal of Creation—then this profoundly contradicted the modern experience of history:

> This, to be sure, is the point at which the horrifying experience of God's absence in our world collides irreconcilably and catastrophically with the doctrine of Creation that renews itself. The radiation of which the mystics speak and which is to attest to the Revelation of God in Creation—that radiation is no longer perceivable by despair. The emptying of the world to a meaningless void not illuminated by any ray of meaning or direction is the experience of him whom I would call the pious atheist.[58]

Like Hans Jonas, Gershom Scholem too did not draw from the Holocaust the conclusion of atheism. While Scholem, unlike Jonas, did not entirely reject the Messianic element of Judaism, he reacted in a similar way to the radical challenge to Judaism posed to Jewish and Christian faith alike by the Holocaust—namely by emphasizing the need to rethink Jewish tradition, shifting its accent from the Messianic hope for redemption to the existential and ethical meaning of God's Creation. Just what he might have thought of Jonas's reflections on the powerlessness of God, if he had been able to take them in, one can only surmise. He would, however, have approved of the fact that Jonas combined the renunciation of Messianic hope with opposition to all dreams of man's self-redemption by way of technological progress, and opposed them with a sober affirmation of the entirely imperfect and yet "good" creation of God. It seems clear enough that had Jonas and Scholem ever confronted this topic in a personal dialogue, the theological, philosophical, and existential religious impact of the Holocaust would have figured as a prominent theme. Unfortunately, there is no evidence for such a dialogue.

[58] Ibid., 283.

II

It appears, then, that the cautious openness expressed in Jonas's and Scholem's initial encounter in Jerusalem was not maintained after the dissolution of the "Pilegesh" circle in the 1940s and Jonas's emigration to Canada after the Second World War. Rather, unpublished sources suggest the development of a sharp conflict that would overshadow the relationship between these two scholars in an enduring way. What now remained was ambiguity: continued mutual affection expressed as a peculiar mixture of kindness, irony, and permanent controversy.[59] But even this distanced form of friendship would eventually be burdened by increasing dissonance, partly resulting from different temperaments, partly from diverging experiences in Israel and in Canada, and later on, to an ever-greater degree, from openly expressed disagreement regarding the correct interpretation of religious history, especially the relationship between Gnosticism and Jewish mysticism.[60] However, notwithstanding the tensions that clouded Jonas's friendship with Scholem time and again over the decades, and despite the distance that certainly affected its very nature, it never came to an absolute break between them. Apparently the foundation laid in Jerusalem was stable enough to bear the clashes between two such strong personalities.[61]

Apart from the scholarly controversies, the main issue separating Jonas and Scholem was how to define loyalty to Zionism and to the recently established Jewish state. Jonas had returned to Palestine in November 1945 after a long period of military service and after having spent long depressing months in Germany as part of the British occupation forces. For two years he lived in the Arab village of Issawiye near Jerusalem, offering a few lecture courses at the Hebrew University and teaching history and philosophy at the English Council of Higher Studies. Since there was no permanent position in philosophy open at the Hebrew University, Jonas began to consider other alternatives. However, at the very start of the Israeli-Arab war of 1948, aged 45 and having already spent five years fighting in the war against Germany,

[59] Jonas, *Erinnerungen*, 268–69.

[60] For this aspect, which must to be neglected here, see Wiese, *The Life and Thought of Hans Jonas*, 59–66.

[61] See, for example, the moving condolence letter Jonas wrote to Scholem's wife Fanya after learning of his friend's death in 1982, in Gershom Scholem, *A Life in Letters, 1914–1982*, ed. Anthony David Skinner (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 494–95.

he was drafted again for military service. In a letter to his uncle Leo Horowitz in Santiago de Chile, Jonas gives a lively account of his family's situation during the war, with a noticeable mixture of pride in the newly established state's "heroic" self-defense and grief about the losses Israel had to bemoan:

> We lived through the difficult weeks and months of the siege of Jerusalem, cut off from the rest of embattled Israel, with shortages of bread and water, without light or anything to burn, while day and night the shells struck the streets and houses, the victims fell, but the stubborn Jewish defense did not relinquish a single foot of ground. One can tell a song of songs of the population's heroism.... At the beginning of July, I was, as an old spec[ialist] called up to the artillery staff in the plain...and by way of the "Burma Road" [a newly built corridor to Jerusalem that helped end the siege] we arrived here.... The most difficult part was now over, not only for us personally, but also for our cause: The building up of our young army while under fire and —under unspeakable difficulty—its armament had, in the meantime, thrived so far that upon the renewed outbreak of armed hostilities following the first ceasefire we immediately moved from defense to attack and in 10 glorious days triumphed on all fronts. Since then, our position has been secured militarily.
>
> Yes, great and breathtaking things have played out in our history during this year: The resolution to partition at Lake Success [the UN partition plan of November 29, 1947], the immediate outbreak of bloody turmoil from the Arab side, the conscious sabotaging of the UN resolution by the disbanding mandate regime, the legacy of chaos—out of it the birth of the new state after 2000 years, abandoned to one's own resources in the face of invasion threatening from all sides, the terrible trial by fire of the new-born [state] in a war against 5 existing states with regular armies, whose canons, tanks, and airplanes we at first could only fight against with the weapons of the old illegal Haganah alone: pistols, rifles, hand grenades and light mortars, until we could procure our own heavy artillery and train our soldiers with it. In the meantime, the positions—on all sides—of an overextended front with hardly any area to retreat to had to be held by the sheer heroic courage of our youth. The seemingly impossible was only possible, and the great gamble of May 14th, in which the total commitment of our existence was risked, only justified by that which had been previously achieved in the decades of the Zionist project of building up [the Yishuv]: the new Jewish man, a youth that believed in itself and its cause in the settlements, villages, and towns of this country, [a youth] that knew what it was fighting for.... It was literally morale against machines, passionate hearts against iron and steel. We had to fill the gaping holes of the first period with that which was most dear to us—and at a terrible price: This youth wholly devoted and proud, the actual living proof of two generations of our work, fell triumphantly in droves [on the battlefield]. An insurmountable pain, mixed with pride and gratitude.... [This] is a rare moment

> in the life of a people, in our case the chance of millennia. What has happened with us, been achieved and suffered by us, has in my firm conviction the characteristic of historic greatness or at least uniqueness, [a characteristic] that with one blow lifted all affairs to a higher level of conscious history, changing the sign that precedes it, even as the content remains unchanged. One of the distinguishing features is the wealth of the unprecedented, the incomparable. This military "ingathering of the galut," for instance, which takes hold of me anew each day and parades before my eyes the uniqueness of our cause! Literally from the ends of the earth, the sons of the age-old people rush in to join the fight in the new Jewish war.... One encounters groups from America, Canada, South Africa, from Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, not to mention the Jewries of the old world from Morocco to Finland. I know of nothing like it in all the history of all the peoples.... For the moment, we are here "a people in arms" to an almost improbable degree how we will manage economically is a puzzle. But hardly anyone here doubts the necessity and the meaning of it. People are, despite all the hardship happy to be here experiencing this moment after 2000 years and to be permitted to take part.... Work is carried out feverishly and we are drawn forward by our own momentum...and by the necessity and possibility of the hour. May this time this straining, this commitment, risk, hope, this despairingly heroic and at the same time modest attempt by the eternally unhappy to be happy—not once against be disappointed.[62]

In its rhetoric of heroism, sacrifice, and survival, as well as the pride in the "new Jewish man" who is fighting against a militarily superior enemy, this letter bears resemblance to Jonas's appeal to the youth of Palestine from 1939. In addition to that, what is interesting in the text is the heightened Zionist rhetoric, the sense of living in a unique historical moment, and the determination to seize the "chance of millennia," even if the prize in terms of bloodshed is high. The establishment of the State of Israel, including the military "ingathering of the galut" which Jonas invokes, seems to have been an important moment for him—the chance of the Jewish people to finally overcome the history of "eternal unhappiness" and persecution in the Diaspora. However, despite this Zionist enthusiasm, there is a hidden element of ambivalence in this letter, namely in the mentioning of the experience of the death of so many young soldiers. In the same letter, Jonas announced that he had been offered "an invitation to take an honorable and well-paid academic position in Canada" and that he was looking forward to "a period

[62] Jonas to Leo Horowitz, October 4, 1948, Hans Jonas papers (not yet catalogued).

of undisturbed work." Jonas had decided to accept a grant from the Lady Davis Foundation to teach at McGill University. He arrived with his family in Montreal in August 1949, moved on to Ottawa in 1951, and in 1955 was offered a chair in philosophy at the New School for Social Research in New York—a convoluted path lying behind him that led from emigration to Palestine through military engagement in the British and Israeli armies and ultimately to the fulfillment of his academic dreams. This move was, as it were, the return of a convinced, even enthusiastic Zionist to the Diaspora, albeit this time to the United States where Jewish life was thriving under democratic and secure economic conditions.

It would have been clear to Jonas that his decision to opt for Diaspora security over Zionist ideals would not find the approval of most of his Jerusalem friends, including Gershom Scholem, and that the Hebrew University would interpret his decision as a betrayal by an old Zionist.[63] Jonas's farewell to both those ideals and his dream of teaching at the Hebrew University had not been an easy one; it had come as a complete surprise to Scholem. In his first several letters from Canada, Jonas had expressed his homesickness for Jerusalem and had asked about his prospects of being offered a chair at the university. In 1951 Scholem informed Jonas that although Jerusalem colleagues doubted he really wanted to return, he, Scholem, had defended him as a faithful Zionist and suggested in his official capacity that the university offer him a professorship.[64] On May 17, 1951, he was able to inform Jonas that the philosophy department had officially decided to appoint him, adding "I congratulate you and wish that our friendly relations may continue."[65] A short time later, Jonas received a letter from Hugo S. Bergman offering him a chair in philosophy. In his memoirs, Jonas indicates that the offer sparked an "inner struggle" and that he finally turned it down for a combination of "reasonable and egoistic but morally appropriate" reasons: he wanted his young children to grow up in security and not endure either "a Spartan life of privation" or death in one of the wars he was sure would follow; having finally succeeded in finding an academic position, he was now in a position to write and

[63] For the strongly Zionist character of the Hebrew University at that time, see David N. Myers, *Re-Inventing the Jewish Past: The European Jewish Intellectuals' Zionist Return to History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

[64] Jonas, *Erinnerungen*, 265.

[65] Scholem to Jonas, May 17, 1951 (private possession of Lore Jonas).

teach freed from "public affairs or crises"—and unburdened by "the specter of Hebrew," a language he felt he had never fully mastered; finally, he simply could not bear the thought of one more "new beginning."[66] In a rather long letter written (despite his own self-doubts in this respect) in Hebrew to Moshe Schwabe, the Hebrew University's rector, confirming the difficulty of his decision and expressing deep regret and the hope for some sort of continued relation with the university, Jonas indicated that the personal price for this chair and a life in Jerusalem would be too high for his family.[67] A copy of the letter was forwarded to Scholem.

As his correspondence with Jonas indicates, Scholem was shocked and deeply hurt by this decision and reacted harshly, accusing Jonas of having betrayed Zionism, as well as of abandoning his solidarity with both Israel and the Hebrew University. Jonas defended himself by explaining his reasons and by emphasizing his responsibility for his family; he apologized for having caused an embarrassing situation and finally added: "May I hope that our friendship will not be affected by these developments?"[68] Unfortunately, the friendship was affected, as shown in subsequent letters. When Scholem repeated his reproach of "disloyalty," Jonas reacted with dismay and quite sharply, emphasizing that his decision had nothing to do with rejecting Zionism or the State of Israel and demanding that a friend should at least have some understanding for his personal situation instead of attacking him for choosing the good life in Canada. Although he was grateful for Scholem's support, he did not feel any obligation with regard to the Hebrew University after having waited in vain for fifteen years for a job in Jerusalem and after having sacrificed five years of his life for the defense of Israel.[69]

[66] Jonas, *Erinnerungen*, 265–66.

[67] Jonas to Moshe Schwabe, the rector of Hebrew University, October 3, 1951 (for the exact wording of the letter, see Wiese, *The Life and Thought of Hans Jonas*, 200–1).

[68] Jonas to Scholem, October 10, 1951.

[69] The entire correspondence is printed and analyzed in Wiese, *The Life and Thought of Hans Jonas*, 52–58.

III

It is important to note that although there was an element of bitterness in it, the dispute that broke out between Jonas and Scholem after Jonas's emigration had nothing to do with disagreement concerning Zionism, Israel, or political practice; rather, it centered on a personal decision regarding whether to live in Israel or the Diaspora. That Jonas chose the latter option did not necessarily result from a revision of his Zionist principles, even if he seems to have developed a certain skepticism when it came to prevailing circumstances in Israel, particularly the economic situation and the improbability of a stable and peaceful situation in the Middle East. The degree to which he in fact continued to identify himself with the Zionist cause, at least in the 1960s, is revealed in his response to the intense and famous controversy sparked by the publication of Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem*.[70] Arendt had been one of Jonas's most important intellectual friends since their time together under Heidegger in Marburg in the early 1920s. It is well known that one personal aspect of the Eichmann controversy was a complete and permanent break between Arendt and Gershom Scholem. The accompanying bitter correspondence between these two prominent German Jews eventually prompted Jonas to take sides with Scholem—and to question the basis of his lifelong friendship with Arendt.[71]

From the very beginning of that friendship, Jonas had felt that Arendt, despite her conscious Jewish identity, did not know too much about Judaism; he came to understand her as a basically apolitical person who had been forced to deal with politics by the events of the Nazi era.[72] For a time Arendt, reflecting the influence of the Zionist activist and theorist Kurt Blumenfeld, had adopted a Zionist perspective and had been active in the Youth Aliyah movement; but she never really agreed with Jonas's political opinions and later, in view of the conflict between Jews and Arabs in Palestine, dissociated herself from Zionism.[73]

[70] On the controversy, see *Hannah Arendt: Twenty Years Later*, ed. Larry May and Jerome Kohn (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997); *Hannah Arendt Revisited: "Eichmann in Jerusalem" und die Folgen*, ed. Gary Smith (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2000); *Hannah Arendt in Jerusalem*, ed. Steve E. Aschheim (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

[71] See Jonas, *Erinnerungen*, 110–16.

[72] Ibid., 124.

[73] See Hannah Arendt, "Zionism Reconsidered," in *Menorah-Journal* 33 (1945): 162–96; Richard J. Bernstein, "Hannah Arendt's Zionism?," in Aschheim, ed., *Hannah*

Although Jonas was "shocked" by this development, he did not mention it when he encountered her in New York in the 1950s "because I had left the Jewish state myself and could not possibly argue as a spokesman for Zionism."[74]

A decade later, the basic differences between Jonas and Arendt concerning both Zionism and the Holocaust, now aggravated by the most passionate controversy among Jewish intellectuals about the Holocaust in the postwar period, nearly destroyed their friendship.[75] Jonas recalls his response to Arendt's basic arguments at one point in his memoirs:

> She was not aware that [a sense of the threat posed by anti-Semitism in the Diaspora] runs like a line straight through the Jewish historical consciousness. Rather, she tried to convince herself and others that the concept of anti-Semitism, as something like a natural element of Jewish existence, simply represents a Zionist invention and obsession. Well and good: I was shocked by such ignorance about Judaism, but above all by the way she gave us, especially the Zionists but also the Jews in general, a share of the blame for the Holocaust, instead of describing the enforced participation in one's own annihilation as a tragic, horrible fact. Hannah did not describe this like Primo Levi, who had been there himself, but made herself into a judge over the behavior of people in this terrible situation—she was extremely sure of herself in this regard and hinted, without saying it explicitly, that she would have behaved entirely differently if she had been there. I was less and less able to forgive her for this, especially since she also advocated the thesis of the "banality of evil," as if Eichmann had basically been an innocent man who did not really know what he was doing, but simply faithfully fulfilled what he was commissioned to do. She said nothing at all about his own fanaticism, rather falling for his self-description.... Hannah here drew a horribly distorted picture of both Jews and Nazis.[76]

One letter from Jonas to Arendt sheds additional light on the crisis between them, while directly addressing the affinity between Jonas's and Scholem's response to the Eichmann debate.[77] Jonas wrote this letter in order to prepare the ground for a personal conversation in which he would persuade Arendt to alter her assessment of Zionism, in

Arendt in Jerusalem, 194–202; Moshe Zimmermann, "Hannah Arendt: The Early Post-Zionism," in ibid., 181–93.

[74] Jonas, *Erinnerungen*, 289–90.

[75] See ibid., 286–94.

[76] Ibid., 291–92.

[77] For the complete letter and a more comprehensive interpretation of Jonas's friendship with Arendt, see Wiese, *The Life and Thought of Hans Jonas*, 68–85 and 181–86.

particular. The harsh tone—indeed the hurt and anger that sometimes comes through—is a sign of the crucial nature of the core issues at stake, in the aftermath of the Holocaust and the establishment of the Jewish state. It shows how profoundly Jonas was affected by the wider debate about these events, and about German-Jewish history in general, a debate in which Arendt's work had taken on a pivotal role; at the same time it illustrates how passionately he desired to rescue a precious and threatened friendship. The letter opens as follows:

> Dear Hannah, I am writing this letter against all arguments of logic and reason. When the time seemed right, I failed to do so; now that it is over, I am doing so. When I read, with horror, the third article [in the *New Yorker* magazine] of "Eichmann in Jerusalem," I meant to implore you by telegraph to at least abstain from a German version.... But then, in mind of the lesson I increasingly learned over the years that you are not open to reason, do not like listening to anyone, and always simply want to be in the right, I said to myself: there is no point. But maybe this omission was wrong. Then, observing the expected storm of criticism and outrage over several months—a storm in which, to the sorrow of the friends of truth, intellectual inferiority sometimes led to disadvantage for the better cause, but in which the embarrassing nature of your responses, to the grief of the friends of Hannah, more than made up for this and unswervingly continued to weave the rope with which you are hanging yourself without letting anybody prevent you from doing so—my sense of futility grew stronger, and this to the extent that a material issue had become a personal matter, so that the neglected (now obsolete) public duty had become a private one which I had to shirk if I wanted our friendship to survive and again could not shirk if it were to survive. What finally prompted me to nevertheless attempt the hopeless—and precisely at the moment that the hopelessness was finally demonstrated—was your published correspondence with Scholem. When I read it—rather late—I was appalled to the core of my heart and said to myself: she is lost. If even the voice of a friend does not reach her any more, if the personal legitimacy acquired over decades, the competence based on a lifetime, the proven independence of a powerful and moral mind is not able to at least make her reflect, stop for a moment, and look into herself—if the answer is the foolish answer that it is not his voice but that of fabricated public opinion, the base answer that the Zionist's eye is blind to the truth, the hopelessly vain answer that your thinking only stems from yourself (as if it were an achievement to learn nothing from others' insights)—then you have to be given up as lost. This dismaying self-exposure, conforming so little with your intelligence that it makes one want to believe in a malicious fake, this clueless parading of what always posed a danger to you but has now become, according to your own self-representation, a deadly weakness, had to arouse the fear and pity of your friends and the *Schadenfreude* of your enemies—however, not of your worst enemy, which

> is to say yourself. And if logic were the decisive criterion, this would have had to suppress my last impulse to come to your help against yourself. For why should I succeed in achieving what Scholem failed at and against which you had shown yourself to be so horridly armed? Namely to make you listen? And how should I, who did not wait for only six weeks like Scholem but for ten months [to respond], be protected against the accusation of having meanwhile become a victim of public opinion? But the paradox is that precisely the hopelessness makes the effort unavoidable, for in the case of a lifelong friend with a noble nature to boot, whom one is aware of precisely as a friend despite recent appearances, one cannot say: she is lost, without having tried everything. Hence I mean to take on the thankless task, although I fear I know your refutations in advance, of demonstrating with one or two examples what is wrong and reprehensible in what you say. I am concerned with revealing the method, not with the correction of facts, which many others have undertaken in a competent and valid manner. And when it comes to contents I choose relatively harmless examples relating to living persons that can be dealt with rather dispassionately, since the unforgivable sins against the dead would conjure up words that, once expressed, could perhaps prove really deadly for our friendship.[78]

This introduction is followed by an extended discussion of Arendt's—now well-known—allegations against Robert Weltsch, the editor of the main Zionist newspaper in Germany before the Nazi rise to power, the *Jüdische Rundschau*. According to Arendt, in his famous article of 1933, "Tragt ihn mit Stolz, den gelben Fleck" (Wear It with Pride, the Yellow Patch) Weltsch had signaled German Zionist agreement with Nazi policies of legal disenfranchisement and persecution of the German Jews.[79] This thesis and its broader implications seemed to Jonas, unsurprisingly enough, to constitute a historical judgment as malicious as it was misleading—one judgment among others that, as the above excerpt suggests, called their very friendship into question. After the extreme criticism Arendt had been subjected to and after her painful break with Scholem, she must have been shocked by the way Jonas, in his powerful attack with its partly imploring, partly sarcastic tone took sides (albeit not publicly, but in a private appeal) with her opponents.

[78] Hans Jonas to Hannah Arendt (n.d. [1963]). Papers of Hannah Arendt, general correspondence, 1938–1976, Hans Jonas, Hannah Arendt Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

[79] See Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (1963; rev. ed. 1965; New York: Penguin Books, 1994), 59–60; Robert Weltsch, *Tragt ihn mit Stolz, den gelben Fleck: Eine Aufsatzreihe der "Jüdischen Rundschau" zur Lage der deutschen Juden* (Nördlingen: Greno, 1988), 24–29.

A written answer does not exist, and whether (and under what circumstances) the conversation Jonas had intended to have with her on the basis of his letter actually took place is unknown. However, Arendt's reaction was apparently so hostile that Jonas came to feel, like Scholem, that there was no basis for renewed dialogue.[80] The arguments with which she responded to Jonas's challenge can easily be inferred from her public response to Scholem. First of all, she asserted her Jewishness, emphasizing she had never felt any temptation to renounce it: "That I am a Jew is one of the unquestioned facts of my life, and I never wanted to alter such brute facts." More importantly, she responded to the reproach of a lack of *ahavat Israel* (love of Israel) that is echoed in Jonas's letter, saying that she in fact did not possess this love, since she was not able to love a people, but only humans, and because for her such an obligation toward one *ethnic group* appeared to her as a "suspect" form of particularism.[81] She rejected Scholem's (and Jonas's) verdict that her book was a "mockery of Zionism," insinuating that this impression was due to his failure to seriously consider her independent historical view, and she defended both her right to historical judgments like those she made about the "Jewish Councils" in Eastern Europe and defended her views on the "banality of evil." The main reason for Jonas's decision to break with her, however, was her accusation that critics like Scholem (and he himself) were part of a Zionist establishment that had launched a slanderous campaign against her—this he experienced as a self-righteous obsession destroying all trust: "Suddenly, everything that had made me trust her personally and enabled us to concede everything to each other, fell apart."[82]

In the end, the dispute—so deeply grounded as it was in the individual emotions and experiences of these two strong German-Jewish figures—led to nothing more than a two year's silence between them. Their reconciliation, however, was based on a tacit agreement to never again raise the contested historical interpretations and memories that were at stake. Despite the crisis whose vehemence was only too understandable given the convictions at issue, particularly the complex and

[80] For one interpretation of the rift between Arendt und Scholem, see Stéphane Mosès, "Das Recht zu urteilen: Hannah Arendt, Gershom Scholem, und der Eichmann-Prozeß," in Smith, ed., *Hannah Arendt Revisited*, 78–92.

[81] Hannah Arendt to Gershom Scholem, July 20, 1963, in Scholem, *A Life in Letters*, 399.

[82] Jonas, *Erinnerungen*, 293.

emotionally charged questions about the memory of the Holocaust which came into play, Jonas's friendly relationship to Hannah Arendt survived until the end of her life. In a letter written on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of their friendship, Jonas characterized it as "that which one could not imagine being without":

> Dearest Hannah, how does one go about writing on the fiftieth anniversary of the beginning of a friendship when the friendship at hand is one such as this is? Maybe by confessing that it has become impossible to conceive of oneself without it. Life meant it well for me when it allowed us to meet in Marburg. What has become of that after 50 years belongs for me simply to that which one could not imagine being without [*gehört für mich eben zu dem Unwegdenkbaren*]. We are not exactly "related natures," often see things quite differently, and react spontaneously in different ways to things, but as to the question of what matters in the end and always, about that we have understood each other from the start without having to say so. There was never any doubt about what was important and what unimportant. Thus we could, apart from the Eichmann affair, debate to our hearts' content about the debatable with the knowledge that we are "in principle" or "in actuality," or however one wants to call that thing, yet in agreement. And in addition, the plain fact that one, thank God, need not give reasons to explain that I like you enormously. And now we have grown old together and look upon one another, having gone separate ways, as once more before the end we go "for the whole" [*"aufs Ganze" gehen*]—that whole, for whose sake we had in those days become students of philosophy, [that whole] that already dangled so deceptively before one, and for which one, for the ultimately truly tempting concept, had saved oneself up for the best moment for it: for as this I perceive old age (even if it does just cost me my two last teeth), where one need not fear anything more, not even the unavoidable embarrassment that keeps said "whole" ready for the cheeky grabbing. One knows it, too, is reconciled to it in advance, can indeed want that it be otherwise. What freedom of composure! Behind the fact of having put it to the test, what one can do! And one says that growing old isn't good. The only reason to complain is the dying of one's contemporaries around one. Your warning shot this year [Hannah Arendt had had a severe heart attack] still lingers in my limbs, and so I call to you with the most wonderful egotism of love: take care! The 50 years, though, have to be celebrated when I am back: Champagne—and in January! For now, flowers will have to do. Best friend, I am thinking of you. Hans.[83]

[83] Jonas to Arendt, November 7, 1974; Hans Jonas papers, Philosophical Archives of the University of Konstanz, HJ 16–16–5.

In her response, dated December 2, 1974, Arendt not surprisingly, avoided responding to Jonas's allusion to their conflict, reacting instead to his thoughts about old age:

> So I am writing to you today actually only in order, for my part, to do something for the fiftieth-year anniversary for which you have prepared me in the most wonderful way.... Yes, we have *grown* old with one another and left only the task of seeing that we can also *be* old with one another, which is still something different. I think just like you: "What freedom of composure." If one, as the cliché says, should become who one is, then being old might consist in being allowed *to be* as one has become – the becoming is finally over with.[84]

In contrast to Hans Jonas, who still had nearly twenty years of scholarly activity ahead of him, it was not granted Hannah Arendt to indulge in this "freedom of composure." More than that, her untimely death in 1976 also deprived both friends of the opportunity to overcome, with a certain distance, the silence about their traumatic discord, to consider in more detail the emerging new, differentiated historiography on German Jewry, Zionism, and the Holocaust, and to attempt to perceive their different views, experiences, and interpretations. The fact that, in his letter, Jonas mentioned the Eichmann debate as the one and only case in which they had been incapable of tolerating the other's perspective (except by being silent about it), or of discussing the issue on the basis of fundamental agreement and trust, demonstrates that he still suffered, after a decade, from the shock this passionate quarrel dealt him. His mentioning it might be understood as a very cautious, implicit attempt to overcome this silence and to take a second look at their dissent in the light of new circumstances, but Jonas must also have felt, given the lack of any echo from Arendt's side, that she was not prepared for that. He tended to explain this silence above all by her stubbornness, without, however, at least in his later public comments on the controversy (for instance in the *Erinnerungen*) ever making any effort to understand the motivations underlying her book on Eichmann within the context of the historiographical debates of the 1960s, or to critically rethink his own assumptions.

Given the fact that, in the wake of their conflict, he had affirmed Scholem's accusation of a lack of *ahavat Israel*, judging her as illiterate

[84] Arendt to Jonas, December 2, 1974, Jonas papers, Philosophical Archives of the University of Konstanz, HJ 16–16–4.

in all things Jewish, it is very interesting to see how later he was apparently convinced that both he and Arendt, beyond their different views on the memory of the Nazi genocide, shared a fundamental loyalty to Judaism and the Jewish people and were, to a certain extent, even deeply bonded with regard to religious sentiments. A few letters Jonas wrote to friends on the occasion of Arendt's funeral in 1976 reveal that his grief about his friend's death included the concern that her Jewish identity might be deliberately concealed. Whereas mainly non-Jewish friends of Arendt vehemently advocated not allowing "any Jewish tone" to sound at the funeral, since Arendt had been alienated from "all things traditionally Jewish," Jonas insisted in a letter to Arendt's cousin, Ernst Fürst, who lived as a lawyer in Tel Aviv, that this would be an entirely wrong signal for a worldwide public and "do bitter injustice to her memory, not to mention her own will." As evidence of Arendt's own wishes, he invoked private conversations in which Arendt had confided to him thoughts about her commitment to Judaism, contemplating the significance of religious language in the face of death.[85] Jonas also wrote extensively about these issues to Arendt's first husband, Günther Anders, who remembered that she had, during their marriage, never spoken about "her faith or disbelief," while he himself had never concealed his atheism.[86] Thereupon, Jonas gave some intriguing insights into his own understanding of Arendt's relationship to Judaism:

> Hannah was continually fascinated by the mystery or riddle of Jewish existence. "A world without Jews is something I cannot imagine," she said to me when we discussed the chances of Jewish survival, for instance, in the event things with Israel should come to catastrophe, which she very much feared. And regarding this possibility she quoted approvingly, and several times, an apocryphal comment of Ben Gurion's [to the effect] that two generations of Israel would ensure another millennium of Judaism in the world: "With a people in possession of such memory!" she added. She was of course not religiously Jewish.... But you will be surprised to hear that she believed in God. Since she was very secretive about this, for many years I knew nothing more of it than scattered hypothetical remarks like "From the sheer findings of the world, e.g., the presence of life and of the mind, the assumption of God is infinitely more probable than the reverse" which of course sounds completely noncommittal in the matter of belief, just a remark about theoretical plausibility. But in the last year, an opportunity arose in which she emerged from the façade and declared herself to me personally. What preceded it was, perhaps a year earlier, an evening at her place with only Mary McCarthy, a friend of hers (visiting in the USA), and Lore [Jonas's wife] and myself. A conversation about religion and atheism ensued which sharpened into a dialogue between me and said friend in which the very intense lady (Catholic) had teased me out far enough philosophically to suddenly ask me the personal question: "Do you believe in God?" It was a breathtaking moment. 999 times out of a thousand, I would have found the question impertinent and answered dismissively, but here enough personal engagement had preceded for me to quickly decide to answer "yes"—which left all those present, myself included, speechless for 2 minutes. With a tactful feeling of shame the conversation turned to other subjects. This as background. On the later occasion between Hannah and me alone—I no longer know how it came about in the course of the conversation—Hannah, with great emphasis and seriousness, gave me the following explanation, literally face to face: "I have always believed in God and never doubted in His existence—perhaps the one thing in my life which stood fast with me." "But Hannah," I cried out, "why then, at that time, when *I* declared myself, your embarrassed silence, so obviously a silence of rejection?" "Oh no," she said, "I was embarrassed about the fact that *you* had uttered it."... These are the facts, reported as well as I remember them, and it is up to you to make of them whatever you can.[87]

It is very difficult to tell whether this story and the interpretation that Jonas gave it, claiming that her strong bonds with Judaism included a discreet religious dimension that she would confide, not without reluctance, only to her nearest friends, gives an authentic description of her self-understanding in this respect. Research on Hannah Arendt's relation to Judaism tends to claim that her public statements in matters of Judaism and Jewish identity are "notably lacking in substance," and that, although vigorously confessing her sense of belonging to the Jewish people or the Jewish *Schicksalsgemeinschaft* ("community of fate"), she "adhered to a problematic separation between 'Jewishness' qua brute ontological datum and 'Judaism' qua religion—an idea that, she admits frankly, never held much of an attraction for her. What is it that remains of 'Jewishness' when one has jettisoned 'Judaism' was a matter

[85] Hans Jonas to Ernst Fürst, December 7, 1975, Hans Jonas papers, Philosophical Archives of the University of Konstanz, HJ 16–16–49.

[86] Günther Anders to Hans Jonas, January 2, 1976, Hans Jonas papers, Philosophical Archives of the University of Konstanz, HJ 16–16–59.

[87] Hans Jonas to Günther Anders, March 1, 1976, Hans Jonas papers, Philosophical Archives of the University of Konstanz, HJ 16–16–59.

she never addressed."[88] Richard J. Bernstein, in his interpretation of Arendt's depiction of Judaism and Jewish history in an age of assimilation, especially her work on Rahel Varnhagen and in *The Jew as Pariah*, characterizes her self-understanding as being a "conscious pariah among a pariah people"[89] and remarks that her distinction between Jewishness and Judaism is extremely problematic: by taking the existence of the Jewish people as a historical fact and then just concerning herself with social and political questions while avoiding the religious dimension amounts, in his eyes, to an attitude of avoiding the question of Jewish identity instead of answering it.[90] Hans Jonas certainly has not read Arendt's works in this light, and his letters in the context of her funeral are not based on a critical analysis of her Jewish identity. They are based, rather, on an emotional impulse to affirm an affinity to her with regard to a dimension of Jewishness that was very important to him. The cited correspondence demonstrates that he and Arendt shared (and discreetly confided to each other) a distinctly untraditional affinity to religious elements connected to what both felt was the "mystery of Jewish existence." The interpretation he gives the scene that he describes to Anders is, in a way, probably more indicative of his specific sense of Jewish identity than an objective view of hers.

Conspicuously, the question concerning the significance that Judaism had for Hannah Arendt plays a paramount role in Jonas's stories about their friendship—a clear indication of the extent to which he was involved personally in such questions of Jewish identity and wished to emphasize her "love of Israel" as well, a love which he had at one time denied her. Whether he did justice to her self-understanding with respect to the religious dimension of her Jewishness or whether this was a projection of his own attitude is difficult to tell. In general, the problem of assessing their relationship is that the image emerging from the available sources of a friendship, which remained unaffected even by the ambiguity of their differing perspectives on contemporary history, is almost completely shaped by Jonas's perspective. Neither Arendt's reaction to his polemical attack nor the way she experienced their reconciliation and the ensuing silence upon the contested issues are documented. Nor is there any document written by her about

[88] Wolin, *Heidegger's Children*, 39.
[89] Richard J. Bernstein, *Hannah Arendt and the Jewish Question* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 18.
[90] Ibid., 27.

her perception of the person and philosopher Jonas, let alone about the significance Jewishness had for his life and thought. In any event, in Jonas's eyes, their different views of the past had not been able to destroy their friendship, nor were they an expression of a fundamentally different way of developing—in a quite untraditional, albeit creative way—a strong Jewish identity after having been exiled from their original context of German Jewry. It is probably not wrong to suggest that it was precisely this sense of exile and of suffering from the catastrophe of Jewish history in the twentieth century that created a strong bond between them—a bond that included the common conviction that it was impossible to abandon loyalty to Judaism.

APPENDIX

HANS JONAS, "OUR PART IN THIS WAR: A WORD TO JEWISH MEN" (SEPTEMBER 1939)

This is our hour, this is our war. It is the hour we have been waiting for with despair and hope in our hearts in these deadly years: the hour when it would be allowed to us after powerlessly enduring all the ignominy, all the physical deprivation and moral violation of our people, to finally confront our archenemy eye to eye, with weapon in hand; to demand retribution; in the great reckoning, to place our account, which was the first, on an equal level; and to actively take part in the subjugation of the universal enemy who was first of all our enemy and who will be it till the end.

This is the war by which alone this evil can once again be driven from the world; without which it would grow rampantly forth beyond all measure, [leaving] in its trail our annihilation: that is why this is our war. We have a first right (*Erstlingsrecht*) to it and a first duty (*Erstlingspflicht*). It is ours to join the fight since it is being fought for us. It is up to us to join in conducting it in our name, as Jews, since it is its outcome that shall reinstate our name. We must not be any less willing to sacrifice ourselves for it than the sons of those states which have now declared war on Hitlerism. Individual dignity, national honor, and political consideration command in equal measure our full participation in this war. It is our duty and must, for any man worth the name, be a necessity.

Let us not speak of the feelings of the individual arising from his personal experiences during these years—of the darkening of our lives, of the deeply burning feeling in our hearts [arising] from the insults inflicted on us, from the justified thirst for revenge. Let us speak rather about why this war against Hitlerism is a cause for our people since what is at stake here is its cause in the absolute sense. If there is one people that has been challenged by Hitler to fight, then it is ours. If there is one people that is obliged as a matter of honor and interest to take up the struggle and to conduct it [while being] willing to make even the greatest sacrifice, then it is our people. In a measure incomparably greater than any of the states currently allied against Hitler, it is we who have been attacked and threatened with annihilation. In an incomparably greater measure, what is at stake in our case is our all [*unser Alles*]. With some, what is at stake is this or that interest, this or that aspect of their national, cultural or imperial existence; they are threatened in one *part*, however essential it may be, of their position on earth—with us, the Nazi principle [*Naziprinzip*], which seeks to expand into a world principle (*Weltprinzip*), aims at the center of our human dignity and at the same time of our naked possibility of existence on earth. We are its metaphysical enemy [*metaphysischer Feind*], its designated victim from the first day on, and no peace will be granted to us as long as this principle or we ourselves, either one or the other, still live.

With us, therefore, it is not a part, but the whole that is at stake. Against us stands truly the *total* war, since *we* are absolutely *negated as a part of humankind*, regardless of what our political, social, or ideological form may be. In this case, no accommodation, no adaptation is possible. Our mere existence is incompatible with the existence of Nazism. A conflict prevails here which has been driven to mythological proportions, and it can end only with the annihilation of one or the other of us. No other people is in *this* situation. With all others, some form of accommodation with this power—distasteful as it may be—is conceivable, and it has long been attempted: well be it for us that the willingness to make concessions has reached its limit, and the call "Thus far and no further!" has sounded. Precisely this provides us with the long-desired chance to finally enter into this battle.

If there were a Jewish state today, it would have to be the first one to follow England and France in declaring war against Hitler's Germany. That it does not exist changes nothing about the basic fact that we must view ourselves as being at war with Germany, and does not release us from the obligation to conduct ourselves as citizens of one of the states waging war—i.e., to perform our part at the *front*.

In truth, we have been at war—passively—for six years already. In the year 1933, it was declared against *us* and has since then been waged against us without letup, with ever growing mercilessness, over an ever growing physical space and, accordingly, with growing ruin on our side. Up to this hour it has been a one-sided war. We have had to watch and endure in impotency that which has been inflicted upon us and our name. Let us recall: thousands of Jewish persons annihilated, thousands of Jewish hearts broken, thousands of Jewish people plundered, tortured, expelled; driven to suicide; transported like livestock and driven into the void. Remember the refugee ships with their cargo of despair, these visions of hell in our century. Think of Shanghai. We were forced to watch as our name was defiled, our values degraded, our

synagogues burned to the ground, our holiest sites desecrated. Where once we were citizens, we were degraded beneath animals, and every rogue was allowed to spit on us—we were forced to endure it! Even the defenseless souls of our children we saw being broken in mid-bloom as victims of this truly satanic hate. Burned into our souls, this pain lives on and cannot be silent. And no defense was possible, not even the attempt at a fight! We were exposed to the most shameless power, which on top of our misery heaped its derision as well.

What has been described here as human fate presents itself in collective measure as national fate: for one year of horror after another we watched as great and highly developed Jewish communities in the core countries of the *golah* [Diaspora] were leveled and eradicated from the face of the Earth. We watched as the war of annihilation was declared against the *whole* of our existence in the world and progressed inexorably. One position after another we had to give over to this irreconcilable enemy. A world began to spread out in which *Judaism* could not be, and *Jews* could not live—and in which for a Jew it would also not be *worth* living. The mere proximity of the Nazi empire began to dissolve even beyond its borders the basis of Jewish emancipation, and even the most remote parts of the Jewish world learned to tremble in a way that will remain in their bones for a long time to come. They all felt the ground beneath their feet begin to shake. But it was not only the status of *emancipation* of the Jews which was threatened—a status that no national Jew, no Zionist may renounce—in this system, there would not even be a place for a *ghetto*-Judaism, a return to which some had begun to believe in: the retreat into the House of Study, which Roman power allowed a politically defeated Judaism, would not be granted to its victim by a victorious Hitlerism, assuming even that this [victim] would for his part be willing. The burned and bombed-out synagogues are evidence of that. "Pharisaic" and "Sadducean" Judaism are equally impossible in a world determined by National Socialism. Under the heel of the Gestapo, intellectual life no longer grows either. The total state allows into its structure no remaining gap of indeterminacy, in which something separate and peculiar to itself [*Eigenes*] could thrive; it spares the soul as little as it does the body. Its anti-Semitism can therefore only mean extermination—or that last degradation which is even worse than that.

This principle of anti-Semitism as "domestic policy," moreover, becomes by necessity an instrument of foreign policy: just as a demonic fate drives the Hitler expansion unerringly into exactly the areas of

Jewish mass settlement and thus constantly provides the machinery of eradication with new material—so is Hitlerism, by the law it has arrogated to itself, *compelled* in *all* paths of its *world* policy to target *us* over and over again—and to do so most in those places where we mean something. That is why what has been said for the *golah* also applies to Eretz Israel, which we would so much like to view as an exception to that tragic law. Let us not deceive ourselves: what must be more unbearable for *this* enemy than a crouching Judaism is an upright one; and as far as its influence reaches, it cannot abide a political-national self-fulfillment, the sovereign unfolding of a *free* Judaism, a highest human flourishing out of its own power, which would be the living refutation of its image of Jewish unworthiness. Even in terms of *Realpolitik*, it [Hitlerism] would have to land here with us, and Jewish Palestine, far from enjoying an exceptional status, would sooner or later have to endure the impact of a Nazism that had achieved world power.

No one should believe, therefore, that this germ of our future would be able to flourish or even merely survive in a world in which *Nazism triumphed*. No one may give in to the Lesser-Palestine delusion [*klein-palästinischer Wahn*] that an oasis of Jewish blossoming could still endure here amidst a *desert of Diaspora laid to waste—al khurban ha-galut* [upon the destruction of the Diaspora]; that Jewish freedom could stir amidst a world from which freedom has disappeared; that an island of Jewish independence could be preserved in a world dominated by hostile forces. The refuting evidence has been delivered to us during this period of unrest—in the form of the Mandate power's retreat before a visibly *greater threat* at its back. At first this was the distant shadow of Hitler. What "Hitler in the Orient" would really mean for us is imaginable only by recalling the fate of the Armenians.

This was the appearance of the world that awaited us to the degree that it was not already reality. A great flood was rising which in the end would wash away our Diaspora just as it would our national existence here in this land. And the most despairing, most inwardly destructive part of it all was the consciousness of absolute defenselessness to which we saw ourselves condemned. No single person, no people can endure this for very long without wounding his soul. He who is mistreated turns in the end into a pariah. Many among us began to get used to the thought that this evil is all-powerful, that nothing can stop its progress. A feeling of fatalism settled paralyzingly upon our spirit. With the uncanny growth of this boa constrictor, the almost magical paralysis of the victim under its gaze, there began to spread a fatalistic certitude

that this fate was inescapable, i.e., that *the death sentence cast upon us as a people was irreversible.* Breathing became hard in an atmosphere full of hate and stifling premonitions of doom [*dumpfer Untergangsahnung*].

But there were also some among us who awaited their hour and swore an oath to not again feel at home in this world and to enjoy its beauty until the moment when fate would have given them a chance to fight and settle accounts. The hour has now come. It is our great chance—a political and moral chance at one and the same time.

Politically it means that by enlisting its sons the Jewish people can for its part help turn away this evil fate directed against it and by that means—i.e., by participating visibly in the front of powers allied against Hitler, and taking the same risks and sacrifices for his defeat—secure anew its civil rights on earth—and indeed its right to life in the whole world as well as its special claim to Eretz Israel. Morally, this chance means that for the sake of our self-respect and the respect of the world we can provide proof that we are not pariahs who impotently swallow their wrath, but men who know to take their lives in their own hands and fight back. The honor denied us by National Socialism we would really have lost, at the moment we entertained the thought of allowing other peoples to fight our cause and of receiving from their hand the gift of equality regained, or even only the elimination of our archenemy.

It is the meaning of Herzl's appearance in our history that he has made such a ghetto-attitude impossible from now on,—that attitude by which we could pull in our head to allow the storms of the peoples to blow over us, waiting all the while for what will come of it for us. By proclaiming the ghetto-people to be a nation, Zionism led it as subject into the arena of peoples and *obliged* it to the risk *of acting as subject of its own historical existence.* And what the Diaspora situation nonetheless barred up to now, regarding a one-sided partisanship in the conflicts among the peoples—this remnant of inhibited decision making in matters of foreign policy has been eliminated by National Socialism: it has referred us with unmistakable clarity to *one* world-side and has thus transported us to the front where we will stand and fall. This time no conflict of loyalty will limit the clarity of our position as a united national body.

This is not the first war in modern times in which Jews have fought. But it is the first in which the *Jewish people as such* is joining the fight. The difference is clear: since emancipation, the sons of our people have fought on all sides in many wars of the European peoples. Yet, never *at all* before *in our galut history* [*Galuthgeschichte*], has the Jewish people been

able through its sons to fight as a whole on one side and for its own cause in a war of the peoples. This is now the case. That is what is historically new and unique about *this* war. For this reason, this is for us a *bellum Judaicum* [Jewish war] in the profoundest sense of the word—the first since the end of our existence as a state. But in contrast to the last *bellum Judaicum* is this one—so we hope—not a war of catastrophe, but a war of salvation from the Jewish catastrophe; not Judah against the world, but Judah with the world against the world-enemy.

This war is, in a figurative sense, also the first war of *religion* in modernity. This *ideational* side exceeds all the aims and calculations of the belligerent government and is itself based in the distribution of the fronts. Necessarily—and independently of how much this is conscious—it is a war of two *principles* of which the one also holds in trust, in the form of Christian-occidental humanity, *Israel's* legacy to the world, [while] the other, the cult of power and contempt for humanity [*Kult der menschenverachtenden Macht*], signifies the absolute negation of this legacy. National Socialism first conceived of this when it judged Christianity as the Judaizing [*Verjudung*] of European humanity and included it in its *metaphysical* anti-Semitism. The churches grasped it when they perceived—for the first time—*this* struggle against Judaism as an attack on their own spiritual [*geistige*] basis in Jewish roots. The rational-humane civilization of modern Europe, detached though it be from religion, is, with its controlling of the instincts, its ethics of consciousness, and its respect for man, also ultimately a branch emerging from that great spiritual legacy whose source was revelation. National Socialism, as the enemy of all these values, as *paganism* in the profoundest sense, has brought about the apparent paradox that a *bellum Christianum* can at the same time be a *bellum Judaicum*. The earlier religious wars in Europe were struggles within Christianity and did not concern us Jews; this is an anti-pagan struggle per se and, in its elementary simplifications suddenly allows to become visible the common ground that unites our Judaism with Christian-occidental culture. The age-old historical legacy of our tribe, our unexhausted contribution to the ethical development of humanity, has also been called upon in this struggle. Thus even in this sense, which goes well beyond mere self-preservation, this war is a *bellum Judaicum* and calls us to our posts.

What can our part in this war consist of? It is naturally to be individually active in all areas which directly and indirectly comprise modern warfare. Since, though, we are talking here about the collective and the absolute, we are speaking only of the most extreme form

of participation—the military. We wish and hope that *Jewish formations*, appearing as such, will fight in the ranks of the allies, and indeed at the point of direct encounter with *our* enemy, the armies of the Third Reich. In a word: we want a *Jewish legion on the western front*. A Czech and a Polish legion are in the process of forming in various countries. It would be eternal shame for the Jewish people if we who are more affected than each of these did not show our flag alongside theirs in the main theater of the war [*Haupttheater des Krieges*]. We expect from the Jewish people this act, this proof of its manliness, this contribution to the mastery of its own fate.

This legion should be an all-Jewish legion, i.e., a legion of world Judaism. Its base for recruitment is the entire Diaspora outside of Hitler's sphere of power, especially all the gathering points of those expelled by the tyranny of Hitler. These will—if we have not completely deceived ourselves about the feelings of honor among Jewish people—have an especially willing ear for this call, will indeed be impatiently expecting it and will accept it with enthusiasm. We place our hope further in the greatest and, after the blows of the last years, only still intact reservoir of Jewish people in the world: America.

In an all-Jewish legion of this kind, *Palestine*, too, must be represented. As the politically most mature group in Jewry, as the only one that is *nationally emancipated*, Palestinian Jewry has a heightened responsibility for this initiative and to serve as an example for all of Jewry [*Gesamtjudenheit*]. Palestine is not an asylum from the perils of galut, but is the vanguard of the galut. Zionism is no Lesser-Palestine matter. This all-Jewish responsibility of Palestine is an *additional* one for the Yishuv: it does not stand in contradiction to the defense of our local positions, but complements them from a higher standpoint. The natural priority of local defense is incontestable; but it must not serve as a reason for the manpower of Jewish Palestine to be completely content in this struggle among peoples [*Völkerringen*] to play the role of a mere *garrison*, and that the mere waiting for possible local developments helps the individual to a complacent excuse for limiting his willingness to sacrifice.

The real front of a country can under present conditions be located far away. The purely local aspect would do justice neither to the real entanglement of Palestine in world decisions nor to its moral task for world Jewry. It would be a failure of the real national idea, a failure of Palestine before the true meaning of Zionism which carries here the name: *khalutziut* [pioneer existence] for all Israel. The decision for Palestine, too, will be made on the battlefields of Europe. It is only there

that a new legitimization of our claims for Palestine is to be gained. A Palestinian department—about the size of which we can say nothing—must not be absent from the All-Jewish Legion [*alljüdische Legion*] in the Anti-Hitler war. A Zionist core must be represented in this military *kibbutz ha-galuyot* [ingathering of the Jews of the Diaspora].

The concern for how to appropriately distribute the Palestinian Jewish forces is a matter for the responsible authorities who, after looking into the matter, can evaluate the result of this appeal—which can only turn out too small, not too large; it is not a question of that *personal* decision for the *more dangerous* posts which the appeal aims at. The individual will hardly be able to judge whether the border runs before or behind him; he can only ask himself: what am I *prepared* to do. His decision is ultimately not a political, but a human one. He will not allow himself to be kept from choosing the more difficult task by fearing that of his peers there could be *too many*. The "too many" can easily be corrected: whoever has signed up for the ongoing cause can always be commanded to some more limited task. The reverse is less simple.

One more matter must be discussed, for the sake of clarifying our inner attitude and our external position: whatever we may hope for from the outcome of the war in terms of Jewish-political gains, of furthering the goals dear to us—and to each it is allowed to harbor such hopes—this must not be linked as a *condition* for our participating. Addressed to whom even? Our axiom is that from a purely Jewish perspective this is "our war." Therefore, it is not up to us *to offer* our part for a foreign cause and to thus ask for service in return, but to perform our part in a matter where from the outset and beyond all choice we *are* an involved party. The *do ut des* attitude would falsify the entire assumption of this struggle as that of a cause of the Jewish people utterly their own. We should know this and also not allow any misunderstandings on the outside to arise about it either: by entering the fight we are not helping others in expectation of a reward, but ourselves so as to fend off our annihilation—and to re-establish our honor. The announcement of our joining the battle would only be devalued by linking it to demands. In any event, in this war our cause is present at an elementary level—and the whole world knows it. With the same genuine, original motivation as that of the side we want to fight on, indeed even more genuinely still, we are a warring party. Therefore it is absolutely not the case that first we choose their party and then join them as an ally, but rather the reverse: their declaration of war against Hitler also gives *us* the chance now, for our part, to *conduct* our

own war, the one long imposed upon us. The basis for our alliance is the declaration of the Prime Minister that this war shall continue "till Hitlerism is destroyed": nothing further is needed. The annihilation of Hitler is an aim in itself—at the moment, *the* aim—and we can justify our *right* to take part (not our "offer" to do so) only with our primary interest in seeing Hitler destroyed. For the Jewish people as a whole there is no goal in the war other than this, and the commitment to it must not be conditional, but unconditional. The moment in which our contributing to this goal is made possible, indeed that this goal itself has even become possible at all, is not the moment to enter into calculations, even if they would concern our otherwise most legitimate interests. We must therefore enter this war without any side glances, without counting on any outcome other than this one. Only then will we be able to say that the first war that the Jewish people conducted in its modern history was a purely *defensive* war.

Jewish men! A generation that experienced the world war consciously is guarded against entering a war lightheartedly, and against deluding itself about its horrors. But *with* this knowledge, to which one must add the knowledge of six years of Hitlerian degradation, we vow that this war of Jews must be taken up and fought at the point where it is most difficult—and where we can look our main enemy in the eye. Nor in deciding to take part need we deceive ourselves about any certainty of the outcome. It suffices to know what the alternative is: if the western powers triumph—and we believe they will—then Hitler falls and there is a *prospect* for life for the Jewish people. If Hitler is victorious, then this means our downfall, here and everywhere: in that case let us at least go down fighting. It is pointless, though, at the outset of such a violent historical event to want to see beyond the immediate aim and to ask how the world may look afterwards. For the sake of acting, the immediate aim is more than enough: the defeat of Hitler. Let us conduct ourselves so that our grandchildren need not one day feel ashamed on our account.

CHAPTER NINE

THE IMMEDIACY OF ENCOUNTER AND THE DANGERS OF DICHOTOMY: BUBER, LEVINAS, AND JONAS ON RESPONSIBILITY

Micha H. Werner

For Dietrich Böhler

The concept of responsibility plays a pivotal role in the philosophy of Hans Jonas as well as in the thought of Martin Buber and Emmanuel Levinas. One may wonder, however, if this is not just a superficial parallel. The relationship between Buber and Levinas is undoubtedly closer than that between the two and Hans Jonas.[1] Unlike Jonas, Buber and Levinas did not try to reestablish the notion of *scala naturae* as a basis of normative ethics; and unlike Buber and Levinas, Jonas did not take part in the project of establishing a philosophy of dialogue. But concerning the basic account of moral responsibility, there are nevertheless some non-trivial analogies and complementary problems in the interpretations of all three philosophers, or so I will argue. Each of them criticizes the solipsistic limitations of Edmund Husserl's philosophy and the egocentrism of Heidegger's concept of "solicitude" or "self-care." Each of them tries to overcome the Kantian subject-object dichotomy. Each of them construes responsibility as a bipolar relation only. And each of them deals with new forms of dichotomies and with problems concerning the exclusion of "thirdness" which emerge from their own conceptual decisions.

[1] Among the few comparative studies on Jonas and Levinas, I want to highlight chapters 6 and 7 in Richard J. Bernstein, *Radical Evil: A Philosophical Interrogation* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002).

1. *Competing Intuitions Concerning the Instance of Moral Responsibility*

Let us begin with some general considerations on moral responsibility. Responsibility, as a relational term, has to be understood as a relation between a *subject* or a bearer of responsibility, an *object* or something for which the subject is responsible, and an *instance* of responsibility or someone to whom the subject is responsible. Whereas some philosophers prefer to add more relations, we may for now be content with the three already mentioned. Each of the three relations has its own problems: With regard to the subject of responsibility, one may try to define the properties which are necessary conditions for ascribing responsibility to it. This is where the debate between compatibilists and incompatibilists takes place. Regarding the object of responsibility, one may ask about the range and the distribution of responsibility. This is the context of numerous discussions, *inter alia* the debate between consequentialists and Kantians on acting and omitting; and this is also the context of Hans Jonas's admonition that the range of our moral responsibility has tremendously expanded on par with our rising power. But the third dimension of responsibility has its problems too, and this holds true particularly with respect to *moral* responsibility. While it is easy to state the instance of legal responsibility or other forms of role-specific responsibilities, the task of specifying the instance of moral responsibility is, indeed, a sophisticated one, at least if undertaken within the limits of secular moral philosophy. In his important book, *The Imperative of Responsibility*,[2] Hans Jonas does not explicitly discuss the problem, but he addresses it in his *Philosophische Untersuchungen und metaphysische Vermutungen*:

> I am responsible for my act as such (as well as for its omission), regardless of there being someone who—now or later—holds me to my responsibility or not. Responsibility exists with or without God, and, of course, without any mundane court. It is, however,... the responsibility *to* something—an obliging instance, to whom we are responsible. This obliging instance is—so people say once they no longer believe in God—the conscience. But this just turns the question to the next, from where the conscience has *its* criteria, from which source *its* rulings are justified.[3]

[2] Hans Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

[3] Hans Jonas, *Philosophische Untersuchungen und metaphysische Vermutungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1992), 131. My translation.

Thus, the reference to human conscience cannot count as a sufficient answer to the question of to whom we are morally responsible. But it seems hard to find a more convincing answer. When trying to specify the instance of moral responsibility, we are confronted with at least two serious problems.

First, we have to answer the question whether the instance of responsibility has to be understood as something finite, like a real person, social institution, or mental entity, or if it has to be viewed as something transcendental that in some way transcends the borders of finite entities. Regarding this question, we have to cope with conflicting intuitions: On the one hand, it appears that moral responsibility, unlike other forms of responsibility, cannot depend on any finite entity, since, given the limitations, the imperfection, and also the egocentrism of finite beings, this could turn moral responsibility into an arbitrary concept. To put it in the words of Derrida: Any *particular* instance of responsibility would mean a "betrayal" or "absolute sacrifice" of all other possible responsibilities.[4] The assumption that the instance of moral responsibility cannot be any empirical entity may therefore be regarded as a consequence of the intuition of *categoricity*, the conviction that ethical responsibility is essentially categorical and hence has to be *universal*. On the other hand, it seems that moral responsibility has to be understood as grounded in our real interactions, in our real "life-world," and that it would imply, as it were, a betrayal of humanity if we should bind moral responsibility to some extramundane entity or some abstract metaphysical concept. For lack of a better name, we may call this second intuition the *intuition of life-world dependency*. Trying to do justice to this intuition, we may interpret the instance of moral responsibility in a way that guarantees that real persons—moral agents and those affected by their actions—are at least in some way represented in it.

At this point however, a second problem arises. The metaphor of representation, due to its political connotations, may lead us to the question, how to determine the proportion between moral agents and those affected by their actions. Regarding this question, the intuition of life-world dependency does not help, since it comes in two different flavors. On the one hand, there is the intuition that moral agents must

[4] See Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 68–69.

never be subjected to rules beyond their own control but should always be able to voluntarily affirm the principles according to which they are living their lives. Thus, morality has to be understood as a specific kind of self-determination. On the other hand, there is the intuition that it is always the other, as a possible object of our actions, who takes center stage in morality, and that the core of morality is respect, care, or perhaps even love for the other. In search of a quick and handy label, we may call these competing intuitions the *intuition of autonomy* and *the intuition of alterity*. Let us now explore which answers Buber, Levinas, and Jonas give to the two problems and how they cope with the intuitions mentioned above.

2. *The Intuition of Alterity as a Challenge for Kant's Philosophy*

One of the philosophical motifs shared by Buber, Levinas, and Jonas is the critical attitude toward Kant and Kantianism. Albeit in very different ways, each of them disputes the inevitability and universal reach of the subject-object dichotomy and plays the intuition of life-world dependency off against Kant's philosophy.[5] All three philosophers share philosophical motifs which may be called phenomenological. But to the extent to which they emphasize especially the intuition of alterity, they also turn against solipsistic and egocentric elements inherent in Edmund Husserl's as well as Martin Heidegger's respective versions of phenomenology, for example against Heidegger's "contentless" decisionism and his self-oriented concept of "solicitude" or "self-care."[6] The

[5] For a more detailed analysis of the anti-Kantian impulse of the philosophy of dialogue, see Michael Theunissen, *The Other: Studies in the Social Ontology of Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, and Buber*, Studies in contemporary German social thought (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984), xx; idem, *Der Andere: Studien zur Sozialontologie der Gegenwart* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1965), 243ff.

[6] See Bernstein, *Radical Evil*, 177ff., 185ff.; and see Jeffrey Bloechl, *Liturgy of the Neighbor: Emmanuel Levinas and the Religion of Responsibility* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2000), 88–106; Alwin Letzkus, *Dekonstruktion und ethische Passion: Denken des Anderen nach Jacques Derrida und Emmanuel Levinas* (Munich: W. Fink, 2002), 135–292; Lawrence Vogel, *The Fragile "We": Ethical Implications of Heidegger's Being and Time* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1994), esp. 103ff.; idem, "Jewish Philosophies after Heidegger: Imagining a Dialogue Between Jonas and Levinas," *The Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 23 (2001): 119–46; Richard Wolin, *Heidegger's Children: Hannah Arendt, Karl Löwith, Hans Jonas, and Herbert Marcuse* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), chap. 5.

following reflections will focus on the debate with Kantianism and thus begin by pointing at a problem of Kant's "social ontology."

Martin Buber's *I and Thou*[7] can in large parts be read as a critique of the physicalistic limitations of Kant's epistemology.[8] The hypostatization of the methodological ideal of natural sciences in his theoretical philosophy urges Kant to dispel human freedom from the world of appearances into an extramundane transcendental sphere, and therefore does not allow for an adequate reconstruction of real communicative interactions between real persons. For any such reconstruction has to presume the possibility not only of free actions, but also of the *appearance* of free actions in our contact with others.[9] Due to these limitations, Kant could not really cope with the intuition of alterity. It is true that the logical operation which in Kant's ethics provides the universal validity of moral principles should also deal with the claims of the other, but it either does not really achieve this task or it merely pretends to do so.[10] For the Kantian universalizing procedure requires that I ask myself if *I* would be content with universal observance of the rule I want to follow.[11] Thus it provides no *real* rule-making but only a thought experiment to see how *I* would feel if *I* were in the other's stead. But that is not the same as taking into account *her or his real* perspective and claims—the perspective and the claims of a concrete other.

[7] Martin Buber, *I and Thou: A New Translation with a Prologue 'I and You' and Notes by Walter A. Kaufmann* (New York: Scribner, 1970).

[8] It may be worth noting, though, that Buber's concept of the I-You relation shares important attributes with Kant's description of respecting the other's dignity by regarding her or him as an end in itself; see Norbert M. Samuelson, *An Introduction to Modern Jewish Philosophy* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1989), 192–93. Jeffrey Bloechl notes a similar congruence between Levinas and Kant's concept of dignity; see Bloechl, *Liturgy of the Neighbor*, 77–82.

[9] See Dietrich Böhler, *Rekonstruktive Pragmatik: Von der Bewußtseinsphilosophie zur Kommunikationsreflexion: Neubegründung der praktischen Wissenschaften und Philosophie* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1985), 56ff.

[10] See also Paul Ricœur, *Oneself as Another* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), chap. 8.

[11] Kant proposes the following question as an "unerring" test for the morality of my maxim: "*Should I be content* that my maxim . . . should hold good as a universal law, for myself as well as for others?" Immanuel Kant, "Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten," in *Werke: Akademie Textausgabe* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1968), 403; trans. Thomas Kingsmill Abbott, http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext04/ikfpm10.txt; emphasis added.

Kantians may argue that Kant's "I" is not really meant to be me as an empirical, singular person but me as a rational member of a "kingdom of ends," which, due to its universal reach, also comprises the perspective of my particular vis-à-vis. So, they may add, the kingdom of ends provides a way out of solipsism since it is to be understood as a forum of universal representation. But here the problem lies since, to say the least, Kant has not made clear how the kingdom of ends could constitute itself as a forum, where real claims of real persons can be settled. Ultimately, the kingdom of ends remains an abstract *idea* of community—a community in pre-established harmony, well-ordered by practical reason, which is already common to all members and which guarantees universality by itself. This is also the reason why in Kant's ethics there is no tension between autonomy and universalism: the will of rational beings—their rational will as opposed to mere affections—is *as such* universal. Thus Kant insinuates that on our way from the egocentric perspective of empirical beings to the universal perspective of rational members of the kingdom of ends, we could skip the perspective of the other, that is to say the perspective of the *concrete* other.[12] And along with this insinuation, he cannot adequately take into account the bodily incarnation, the biological foundation, and natural history of human reason. While the former problem is addressed particularly by Buber and Levinas, Jonas also deals with the latter.

3. *Martin Buber's "I and Thou" as an Answer to Kantianism*

Buber's answer to Kantian epistemology is quite radical. According to him there are two "basic words"—two fundamentally different and irreducible ways to refer to the world, which correspond to two different basic attitudes or "mode[s] of existence."[13] One of these attitudes seems very similar to the attitude of a Kantian subject—it is the attitude of an I toward an It. Like the Kantian world of appearances, the I-It relation is governed by the subject-object dichotomy. Regarding other beings as an It, we address them as things that consist of qualities and processes that consist of moments, things recorded in terms of spatial coordinates

[12] See George H. Mead, *Mind, Self, and Society: From the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967).
[13] Buber, *I and Thou*, 53, cf. 82.

and processes recorded in terms of temporal coordinates, things and processes that are bounded by other things and processes and capable of being measured against and compared with those others.[14]

As long as we stay in the I-It relation we are not living as whole beings and we have no chance of achieving wholeness. Our essence stays concealed, we cannot actualize it. And since we have "nothing but objects" and "objects consist in having been" we have "only a past and no present" and our "moment has no presence."[15] But, following Buber, we are not condemned to persist in the suffocating relation between I and It throughout our entire life. It may happen to us "by grace"[16] that another being encounters us as a You, and if we venture entering the relation to a You, we transcend the Kantian world of objectivity. Entering into the I-You relation is possible only as a deed of our whole person and it is also only by that "essential deed"[17] that we could actually become whole persons: "Man becomes an I through a You."[18] Addressing other beings as a You, we do not see them as physical objects.[19] What constitutes the relation between I and You is not observation or instrumental action but *dialogue*.

For Buber, however, dialogue does not necessarily mean a real *linguistic* dialogue. Concerning the role of language, Buber's remarks are somewhat ambivalent.[20] On the one hand, Buber characterizes the two different world-relations as a correlative of the two pairs of basic *words* (I-You and I-It). He also emphasizes that if the You is another person, the I-You relation is an essentially linguistic relation (it is "*sprachgestaltig*").[21] On the other hand, Buber regards the I-You relation as "unmediated": "Nothing conceptual intervenes between I and You, no prior knowledge and no imagination."[22] Regarding the unmediated nature of the I-You relation, Buber's statements are stern and apodictic: "Every means is an obstacle. Only where all means have disintegrated

[14] Ibid., 82.
[15] Ibid., 63–64.
[16] Ibid., 62.
[17] Ibid., 62.
[18] Ibid., 80.
[19] See ibid., 59.
[20] See Bernhard Casper, *Das dialogische Denken: Franz Rosenzweig, Ferdinand Ebner, und Martin Buber*, 2nd ed. (Freiburg i. Br.: Alber, 2002), 285–86.
[21] Martin Buber, *Ich und Du* (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam Jun., 1995), 6; the translation does not seem perfectly accurate here; cf. Buber, *I and Thou*, 56.
[22] Buber, *I and Thou*, 62.

encounters occur."[23] However, it is obvious that any real linguistic dialogue is mediated by physical entities and events which act as signs and which on their part relate to other physical, mental, social, or cultural entities, events, or relations as their reference. Buber himself even supposes that it is only the It-world that can actually be a topic of linguistic communication.[24] Thus for Buber the ideal I-You relation is the relation of a silent, a "prelinguistic" dialogue:

> Only silence toward the You, the silence of *all* tongues, the taciturn waiting in the unformed, undifferentiated, prelinguistic word leaves the You free and stands together with it in reserve where the spirit does not manifest itself but is. All response binds the You into the It-world.[25]

Buber himself appears to be concerned about the ambivalent status of language in his picture of the I-You relation, since he wonders: "But how can we incorporate into the world of the basic word what lies outside language?"[26] His answer to that concern is the idea of the prelinguistic language of spirit.[27] Buber attributes this kind of spirit also to animals: "The eyes of an animal have the capacity of a great language."[28] We may therefore be encountered not only by persons and "spiritual beings" but also by non-personal forms of nature like animals or even trees.[29] Thus the I-You relation is reciprocal also in case our You is an animal or even a tree: "relation is reciprocity."[30]

[23] Ibid., 63.
[24] Ibid., 63.
[25] Ibid., 89.
[26] Ibid., 57.
[27] "Man speaks in many tongues—tongues of language, of art, of action—but the spirit is one.... Spirit is word. And even as verbal speech may first become word in the brain of man and then become sound in his throat, although both are merely refractions of true event because in truth language does not reside in man but man stands in language and speaks out of it—so it is with all words, all spirit." Ibid., 89.
[28] Ibid., 144.
[29] "Three are the spheres in which the world of relation arises. The first: life with nature. Here the relation vibrates in the dark and remains below language. The creatures stir across from us, but they are unable to come to us, and the You we say to them sticks to the threshold of language. The second: life with men. Here the relation is manifest and enters language. We can give and receive the You. The third: life with spiritual beings. Here the relation is wrapped in a cloud but reveals itself, it lacks but creates language. We hear no You and yet feel addressed; we answer—creating, thinking, acting: with our being we speak the basic word, unable to say You with our mouth." Ibid., 56–57, cf. 149–50.
[30] Ibid., 58.

The world of It is dominated entirely by causal connections between objects which set limits to each other.[31] But by addressing another being as You, as a partner in a (silent) dialogue, we step inside a relationship where responsibility and love take place.[32] According to Buber, love must not be seen as a mental or psychological state of the lovers, but as something *between* the loving beings. As a relation of responsibility between beings—as "responsibility of an I for a You"[33]—love is more real than just the *feeling* of love, which may accompany this relation.

The I-You relation is exclusive. As long as we stay in the relation to a You, our You claims all of our advertence:

> Every actual relationship to another being in the world is exclusive. Its You is freed and steps forth to confront us in its uniqueness. It fills the firmament—not as if there were nothing else, but everything else lives in *its* light.[34]

Thus any relation to a You, which may also, as part of the It-world, be regarded as a finite being, excludes other finite beings, which cannot, at the same time, act as our You:

> As long as the presence of the relationship endures, this world-wideness cannot be infringed. But as soon as a You becomes an It, the world-wideness of the relationship appears as an injustice against the world, and its exclusiveness as an exclusion of the universe.[35]

Solely in relation to God are unconditional exclusiveness and unconditional inclusiveness one in which the universe is comprehended.[36]

4. *Emmanuel Levinas as Martin Buber's Heir and Critic*

The similarities between Buber's philosophy of dialogue and the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas are striking and have often been mentioned.[37]

[31] Ibid., 100.
[32] Ibid., 66–67.
[33] Ibid., 66.
[34] Ibid., 126.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid., 148.
[37] See Peter Atterton, Matthew Calarco, and Maurice S. Friedman, "Introduction," in *Levinas & Buber: Dialogue & Difference* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2004), 1–28, here 6; "Buber's I-Thou relationship has obvious parallels to Levinas's face-to-face, in which I recognize the otherness of the other not by competing with him but by responding in a relation of *discourse*. Both Buber and Levinas place the relationship

Levinas himself acknowledges Buber as a predecessor, even if he claims that it was "not by starting out from the Buberian oeuvre that [he had] been led to a reflection on the alterity of the Other":[38]

> That valuation of the dia-logical relation and its phenomenological irreducibility, its fitness to constitute a meaningful order that is autonomous and as legitimate as the traditional and privileged *subject-object* correlation in the operation of knowledge – that will remain the unforgettable contribution of Martin Buber's philosophical labours.... Any reflection on the alterity of the other in his or her irreducibility to the objectivity of objects and the beings of beings must recognize the new perspective Buber opened.[39]

Levinas approves of Buber's differentiation of two possible attitudes and world-relations, and, based on the phenomenological distinction between being as being and being as entity, he deepens that dichotomy and underlines the exteriority of the other. For him, just as for Buber, responsibility is an integral element of the relation between me and the other whom I address as a You (*Vous*). Indeed, "Buber's statements that "love is [a] responsibility of an I for a You"... and "responsibility which does not respond to a word is a metaphor of morality"... could have stemmed from Levinas."[40] In solemn words Levinas emphasizes the immediacy of my being encountered by the other, who appears in the epiphany of his face. Inseparably associated with that epiphany is the manifestation of my responsibility for the other. Following Levinas, the face *as such* is already a begging, but also an imperative, which makes me responsible for the mortal other. It is the origin of value

with otherness—or the readiness for such an encounter—at the beginning of experience. Both consider the encounter as oriented toward the other prior to theoretical understanding and knowledge. And finally, both posit the relation with the Thou as in some sense incorporating or deriving from the relation with the absolutely Other called God."

[38] Emmanuel Levinas, "On Buber," in *Levinas & Buber: Dialogue & Difference*, ed. Peter Atterton, Matthew Calarco, and Maurice S. Friedman (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2004), 32–36, here 32. The fact is that even before 1923 (the year of publication of *Ich und Du*) the philosophy of dialogue had multiple parents—Hermann Cohen, Ferdinand Ebner, Gabriel Marcel, Franz Rosenzweig, and finally Martin Buber—who came to similar conclusions independently; see Theunissen, *The Other*, xx; idem, *Der Andere*, 253.

[39] Emmanuel Levinas, *Outside the Subject*, trans. Michael B. Smith (London: Athlone, 1993), 41.

[40] Stephan Strasser, "Buber and Levinas: Philosophical Reflections on an Opposition," in Atterton, Calarco and Friedman, eds., *Levinas & Buber: Dialogue & Difference*, 37–48, here 38; first citation, Buber, *I and Thou*, 66, second citation, Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man* (London; New York: Routledge, 2002), 17.

or the good and the idea of human order.[41] Levinas's privileging the saying to the said may also be seen as an analogy to Buber's reserved stance on language.[42]

There are points of disagreement between Buber and Levinas as well.[43] In his essay, *Violence and Metaphysics*, Derrida summarizes three critical motifs in Levinas's discussion of Buber: Levinas criticizes Buber's account of the I-You relation "(1) for being reciprocal and symmetrical, thus committing violence against height, and especially against separateness, and secretiveness; (2) for being formal, capable of 'uniting man to things, as much as man to man'; (3) for preferring... the 'clandestine nature' of the couple which is 'self-sufficient and forgetful of the universe.'"[44] Owing to their systematic relevance we may briefly examine these issues, even though Levinas's position is not consistent throughout his work and it is hence unclear how far he upholds the second and third charge in his later publications.[45]

As to the first point—the "main thing separating"[46] Levinas from Buber—one may doubt that Levinas's portrayal of Buber's position is completely adequate. While Buber indeed emphasizes the reciprocity of the I-You relation, this does not in every case imply *symmetry*, as he himself points out in his postscript to *I and Thou*. The existence of asymmetric types of I-You relations seems obvious in regard to the relation between human beings and God or the relation between human beings and animals or plants. Following Buber there are even cases of asymmetric relations between human beings.[47] But even if we revise

[41] See Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969).

[42] For a benign analysis of Levinas's conception of saying, see Bloechl, *Liturgy of the Neighbor*, 241–42.

[43] See Arno Münster, *Le principe dialogique: De la réflexion monologique vers la proflexion intersubjective: essais sur M. Buber, E. Lévinas, F. Rosenzweig, G. Scholem, et E. Bloch* (Paris: Kimé, 1997), 61–79, and the very instructive studies assembled in Atterton, Calarco, and Friedman, eds., *Levinas & Buber*.

[44] Jacques Derrida, "Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas," in idem, *Writing and Difference* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 97–153, here 134, n. 37.

[45] See Atterton, Calarco, and Friedman, "Introduction," 6; Robert Bernasconi, "'Failure of Communication' as a Surplus: Dialogue and Lack of Dialogue," in Atterton, Calarco, and Friedman, eds., *Levinas & Buber: Dialogue & Difference*, 68–91; Neve Gordon, "Ethics and the Place of the Other," in ibid., 98–115, here 104–5, 108ff.

[46] Levinas, "On Buber," 32.

[47] See Buber, *I and Thou*, 177; Sydney Ch. Rome and Beatrice K. Rome, *Philosophical Interrogations: Interrogations of Martin Buber, John Wild, Jean Wahl, Brand Blanshard, Paul Weiss, Charles Hartshorne, Paul Tillich* (New York: Holt, 1964), 27ff.; Maurice S. Friedman,

Levinas's picture of Buber, Levinas is correct in stating disagreement with Buber, since Buber argues that "'asymmetry' is only one of the possibilities of the I-Thou relation, not its rule,"[48] while Levinas claims that the I-You relation is *in any case* asymmetrical, that it is asymmetrical by its very nature. According to Levinas, the other always encounters us from a *position of height*, he "has always—and *by right*...—a right...over Me."[49] It is important to notice that this asymmetry should not only act as an antidote to the egoistic inclinations of human nature—as it is for Kant, whose "asymmetric" principle to realize our own perfection and the happiness of others is meant to be fully compatible with ethical universalism. For Levinas, the asymmetry is a substantial characteristic of our relation to the other.

Regarding the charge of formalism, one may argue that it refers rather to a problem of philosophical language than to a basic problem of Buber's position. How can we speak at all about being encountered by the *singular* other in *general* terms? Must not any effort to describe general attributes of encounter appear "formal," compared with the adventure of real encounter? The only chance to deal with that problem is to be content with *pointing at* actual encounter instead of trying to *describe* it—and in some passages of *I and Thou* Buber does just this: "every word must falsify; but look."[50] Levinas may still have a point insofar as Buber separates the I-You relation from any hint at the It-world and thus from any specification of the concrete You we are confronting. The non-dialectic dichotomy of the two world-relations leaves the other (as a You) devoid not only of generally ascribable attributes but of any *possible* attributes. However, this problem is present also in Levinas's philosophy, since Levinas's *vous* encounters me also from beyond the world of concrete attributes.

Things may be similar concerning Levinas's third critique of Buber. The exclusive character of the I-You relation, its exclusion of third persons, is indeed a crucial problem, especially if we regard that relation as the basis for a comprehensive account of normative ethics. This problem seems to be inseparably connected with the notion of

"Martin Buber and Emmanuel Levinas: An Ethical Query," in Atterton, Calarco, and Friedman, eds., *Levinas & Buber: Dialogue & Difference*, 116–32, here 120ff.; Gordon, "Ethics," 103.

[48] Buber in Rome and Rome, *Interrogations*, 28.

[49] Levinas, "On Buber," 33.

[50] Buber, *I and Thou*, 67.

the I-You relation as an *immediate* relation. But the exclusion of any third person from the I-You relation poses a problem for Levinas as well as for Buber. One may even argue that the problem is more severe for Levinas than for Buber, since Buber does not claim to provide a comprehensive philosophy of moral obligations. The crucial question in Buber's *I and Thou* is not which obligations we have toward others or how to fulfill these, but how to become a whole being—how to become present and authentic. Hence he writes: "Whether the institutions of the state become freer and those of the economy juster, that is important, but not for the question concerning actual life that is being posed here."[51] His focus on authenticity is also the reason why Buber states: "If all were clothed and well nourished, then the real ethical problem would become wholly visible for the first time."[52] One may criticize Buber for neglecting the problems of social justice,[53] but he is careful at least in passing his philosophy of dialogue off as a substitute for existing conceptions of practical philosophy. Levinas, on the other hand, in *Otherwise than Being, or, Beyond Essence*[54] explicitly tries to give an account of justice as well as of responsibility for the other who actually encounters us. But it seems doubtful if the boundless responsibility for the other, who appears in his face, can in any way be reconciled with the demands of justice, since justice inevitably requires some standpoint of interpersonal comparison.

5. *The Dichotomic Epistemology of the Philosophy of Dialogue and Its Implications for the Concept of Responsibility*

As we have seen, the intuition of life-world dependency and especially the intuition of alterity is a central issue in the critique of Kant, brought up by Buber, Levinas, and Jonas. Buber and the other philosophers of

[51] Ibid., 99.

[52] Martin Buber, "Replies to My Critics," in *The Philosophy of Martin Buber*, ed. Paul A. Schilpp and Maurice S. Friedman (LaSalle, IL: Open Court, 1967), 689–744, here 723.

[53] Indeed, the relevant passages of *I and Thou* are not free of social romanticism. But we cannot discuss Buber's conception of political ethics in detail here, which would be pointless without referring to his later works; see Martin Buber, *Paths in Utopia* (New York: Macmillan, 1950).

[54] Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being, or, Beyond Essence* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1998).

dialogue have brought forward an important insight by distinguishing between two world-relations. While neo-Kantians had already conceded the existence of a realm of culture and social interactions as a special part of the world of appearances besides the realm of physical objects, Buber emphasized the distinction not only between different types of objects but between different types of attitudes and relations. This distinction of world-relations is significant for any adequate understanding of moral responsibility as something grounded within interactions between real persons. For as long as we restrict our relation to the world to that type of an observing and engineering relation which we may have as physicists to the objects of our experiment, there is no room at all for responsibility, neither in ourselves nor in the outer world. But once we try to share our observations, or ask a colleague for help, or just think about the next steps of our experiment by ourselves, we cannot avoid stepping into another type of relation to other persons or to ourselves, namely a linguistic and reflective relation, where we are held responsible for our statements and for our conduct in general and where we also hold ourselves or others to certain kinds of responsibility. One could even assume that the self-ascription of responsibility is a constitutive condition of being a person and that someone who as a person addresses another one as a person cannot help but ascribe responsibility to each of them. Buber and Levinas, of course, did not want to go that far. Unlike the exponents of discourse ethics[55] they did not try to reconcile their insight into the existence of the I-You relation with a Kantian concept of ethics—even if Buber occasionally uses Kantian terms like "the *a priori* of relation."[56]

Ironically, Buber and Levinas in some respect remain much closer to Kant than the protagonists of discourse ethics: Insofar as they conceive the relationship between the I-You relation and the I-It relation as a strict dichotomy, they seem to be true followers of Kant, as he also draws an insuperable line between the world of appearances and the transcendental sphere, where personal freedom may exist. Though the other for Buber and Levinas is not beyond any possible experience, it is also true that the I-You relation or the epiphany of the face, on the one hand, and the I-It relation or the world of objectivity on the other

[55] See Karl-Otto Apel, *Towards a Transformation of Philosophy* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980); Jürgen Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action: Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990).

[56] Buber, *I and Thou*, 119.

hand mutually exclude each other. There is no intermediation between them. Moreover, due to the immediacy of the I-You relation and the resulting exclusion of (real linguistic) language it even seems unclear how intermediation between the realm of You and the realm of It should at all be possible.[57] Indeed, Buber's option for a "silent language" does not seem compelling. Where Buber writes that "all response binds the You into the It-world,"[58] he seems to underestimate the capacity of real (linguistic) language not only to express but also to constitute interpersonal relations. While of course in some way referring to the It-world, sentences like "I promise to do X" or "Please excuse me for Y" or even "I can assure you of Z" not only act as means of communication about the It-world, but also generate actual relations between subjects. Since Buber does not reflect on this pragmatic dimension of real language, he leaves aside the intrinsic normativity of language. If "all response binds the You into the It-world," it seems to be better not to respond, if we do not want to destroy the presence of the I-You relation. Hence Levinas's critique of the intimacy of Buber's I-You relation may be valid in some sense: It appears a consequence of Buber's preference for the "silent language of spirit" that the relation of responsibility remains empty.

Since the exclusive character of actual relationship implies also the exclusion of any third person, it directly leads into serious issues of justice. While reflecting on these problems extensively, Levinas does not seem to have a convincing answer to them. Far from it, his insistence on the asymmetry of the I-You relation rather aggravates the problem. For as soon as we try to include the perspective of a third person, it is no longer clear who may justifiably claim the position of height. Then it becomes inevitable to balance different needs of different beings and thus to make interpersonal comparisons.[59] These are possible only if we put into perspective and relativize the perspective of concrete others

[57] See Casper, *Das dialogische Denken*, 282ff., with reference to Hermann L. Goldschmidt, *Hermann Cohen und Martin Buber: Ein Jahrhundert Ringen um jüdische Wirklichkeit* (Geneva: Migdal, 1946), 70–71; see also Theunissen's detailed analysis of the "negative" character of Buber's concept of the I-You relation in *Other*, §§ 45–72.

[58] Buber, *I and Thou*, 89.

[59] For a detailed analysis see Torsten Habbel, *Der Dritte stört: Emmanuel Levinas, Herausforderung für politische Theologie und Befreiungsphilosophie, mit einem Exkurs zum Verhältnis zwischen E. Levinas und M. Buber* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald-Verlag, 1994), esp. 104–41; Bloechl, *Liturgy of the Neighbor*, esp. 54–57; Münster, *Principe*, 75–79; Wolfgang Nikolaus Krewani, *Emmanuel Levinas: Denker des Anderen* (Freiburg: Karl Alber, 1992), esp. 240ff.

and thus refer to relevant circumstances of the "It-world." But this, of course, is impossible as long as the singular other, in Buber's words, "fills the firmament." The dichotomic structure of world-relations, which prevents any intermediation, comparison or exchange between others seen as our You and others seen as third persons thus makes it impossible to construe a comprehensive account of ethics, including not only charity but also justice, in terms of the philosophy of dialogue:

> The "comparison of the incomparable" which Levinas demands cannot be thought within the context of his own approach; encountering the third person, who is always present, the axiom of responsibility, asymmetry, cannot be sustained, so that the justification of responsibility loses its basis. Hence the transfer from the dyadic relation to a theory of justice leads into aporia.[60]

But if it is true that the asymmetry of the relation between the other and me does lead into severe issues of justice, why does Levinas insist on this asymmetry? A plausible explanation may be that Levinas, by ascribing infinite height to the other, tries to reconcile the intuition of alterity with the intuition of categoricity, that he tries to secure the imperative, categorical character of our moral obligation, while at the same time disapproving of universalism. Levinas explicitly turns against ethical universalism. Following Levinas, "Universality," as found in the ontological systems of philosophy, "appears as impersonal" and must therefore be regarded as a kind of "inhumanity."[61] As mentioned above, Kant's conception of ethical universalism may indeed be criticized for insinuating an immediate access to the interpersonal standpoint of universalism, thereby skipping the perspective of the concrete other. Levinas's anti-universalism, however, his commitment to the perspective of the concrete other and thus to the *intuition of alterity*, goes beyond a mere epistemological critique of Kant's philosophy. Levinas charges philosophical universalism *as such* for being violent. But the discarding of universalism poses the problem of how to rescue the categorical character of ethical obligation. For the rejection of universalism is also a refusal of the standpoint of morality, the universal *moral point of view*, which for Kant is—speaking in Levinas's terms—the position of "ethical height" and thus can act as the origin of unconditional moral obligations. For Kant, the instance of moral responsibility is

[60] Habbel, *Der Dritte stört*, 130. My translation.
[61] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 46.

the (virtual) community of the "kingdom of ends," the interpersonal standpoint of which is represented in human conscience. Abolishing that standpoint of universalism, Levinas either has to renounce the categorical character of responsibility or raise an alternative standpoint of "height." But where could he find such a standpoint? Given that the bipolar relation between the other and me is exclusive, there seem to be just two alternatives: to identify the instance of responsibility with the other (the object of responsibility), or with me (its subject). Levinas chooses the first option and ascribes to the other the ethical position of infinite height so that I find myself as the other's hostage. This, of course, is a radical consequence, but, given the exclusiveness of the bipolar relation between the other and me, Levinas's decision at least seems traceable.

6. *Elements of Intuitionism and Naturalism in Hans Jonas's Ethics*

Hans Jonas had a good personal relation to Martin Buber, whose work was of pivotal importance for Jonas's intellectual biography since his schooldays.[62] But unlike Levinas, Jonas cannot be assigned to the tradition of the philosophy of dialogue. However, there are parallels between Jonas's concept of responsibility and the approach of Buber and Levinas. First of all, Jonas joins in the effort to overcome the subject-object dichotomy. For him, just as for Buber and Levinas, the physicalistic perception of the world is fundamentally deficient. In his *The Phenomenon of Life: Toward a Philosophical Biology*, Jonas traces the development of the modern scientific worldview in a way which calls to mind the outline given in Buber's *I and Thou*.[63] He also shares with the exponents of the philosophy of dialogue the conviction that there is another, pre-scientific access to the world, which does not present the world as a conglomeration of neutral objects but allows for spontaneous and immediate perceptions—or intuitions—of value. Jonas also to some extent shares with Levinas (and also with other

[62] See Hans Jonas, *Erinnerungen: Nach Gesprächen mit Rachel Salamander*, ed. Christian Wiese (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005).
[63] Hans Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life: Toward a Philosophical Biology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), esp. chap. 1; Buber, *I and Thou*, 69–82.

phenomenologists like Max Scheler)[64] the conviction that ethics can be based on such value-intuitions. Thus he tries to show—in the same pointing language we already know from Buber—that the sheer sight of a breathing newborn baby directs to us a claim for aid and care: "Look and you know."[65] This claim is, Jonas affirms, not irresistible but uncontradictable: so even if it

> can meet with deafness (though at least in the mother this is considered an aberration), or can be drowned by other calls and pressures, like sacrifice of the firstborn, Spartan child-exposure, bare self-preservation—this fact takes nothing away from the claim being incontestable as such and immediately evident.[66]

Just as for Buber and Levinas, moral value, obligation, and responsibility immediately occur in concrete relation to another animate being. For Jonas, though, it is a special kind of relation: the paradigm of moral responsibility is the relationship between parents and their children. Again like Buber, who speaks about the realness of love in *I and Thou*, Jonas argues that the moral claim of the infant and our immediate responsibility for him must not be reduced to some kind of inner feeling. The evident moral claim of the newborn must not be confused with "sympathy, pity, or, whichever of the emotions may come into play on our part.... I mean strictly just this: that here the plain being of a *de facto* existent immanently and evidently contains an ought for others, and would do so even if nature would not succour this ought with powerful instincts or assume its job alone."[67]

Following Jonas, this intuitively evident ought may serve as basis for a sound foundation of ethics, which in that respect might be regarded as a variety of ethical intuitionism. But Jonas argues what Levinas would never have conceded, namely that the newborn baby has to be understood as a paradigm of being, an "*ontic* paradigm."[68] Levinas would have presumably rejected such a statement as a relapse into an outdated and potentially violent "ontological" conception of philosophy, and Buber

[64] See Max Scheler, *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik: Neuer Versuch der Grundlegung eines ethischen Personalismus*, 3rd ed. (Halle a. d. S.: Niemeyer, 1927). Jonas refers to this work in the context of his critique of Kant—Jonas shares Scheler's charge of "formalism"; see Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility*, 89, n. 7.

[65] Ibid., 131.

[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Ibid., 130.

also would scarcely have endorsed it. Their presumptive discomfort is the result of a basic dissent: Jonas, unlike Buber and Levinas, does not purport a dualistic epistemology. While he in fact differentiates between our pre-scientific, unrestrained experience of the phenomena and the scientific access to reality, which is methodically delimited as to allow general propositional knowledge, he does not discriminate as radically as Buber and Levinas between two disparate world-relations. Our pre-scientific encounter with the newborn does not lead beyond the world of natural sciences but discloses important additional aspects which belong to this world. Thus for Jonas, the value we intuitively perceive in the case of the newborn baby is an *objective* value and thus can not only be attributed to all other human beings, but to some degree can also be extended to the entire realm of animate beings.

As in the case of any intuitionist approach, Jonas's argument leaves open two critical questions: How can our intuitive evidence guarantee the objectivity of that value or justify its intersubjective validity? And how can we legitimately generalize our value-intuitions if they are not shared by all persons in all relevant situations?[69] As to the first point, we likely have to concede that "'intuitions' are not strictly speaking a *justification* at all.... At the most, intuitions are a window that opens on to some fascinating insights, but they cannot grant the truth of the picture they show."[70] As to the second point, Jonas's effort to defend the universal validity of our benevolent intuitions in view of examples of deviant reactions by explaining the latter as results of "deafness" or "other calls and pressures" does not seem very convincing. For this explanation is structurally equal with the interpretation of our benevolent intuitions as results of "powerful instincts," an interpretation which, following Jonas, does not question the validity of the intuitions. Thus Jonas is apparently applying double standards here, and it seems unclear how that may be justified. Richard Wolin points to another problem connected to the question of generalization. He argues that "the very uniqueness of the rapport between parent and child interferes with the prospect of transposing it to extra-familial settings. Its exclusive nature poses serious obstacles to extending it to other human relationships, let alone to humanity in general."[71]

[69] See Christian Illies, *The Grounds of Ethical Judgement: New Transcendental Arguments in Moral Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 21ff.

[70] Ibid., 21.

[71] Wolin, *Heidegger's Children*, 122.

While Jonas shares the intuitionist approach to some extent, it is important for the original characterization of his ethics that he combines ethical intuitionism with naturalism.[72] Thus he deploys a comprehensive philosophical interpretation of biological life. His philosophy of nature, as presented in *The Phenomenon of Life: Toward a Philosophical Biology*, is undoubtedly one of his most important contributions to current philosophy. It is meant as an interpretation of nature, which is intrinsically plausible as well as compatible with the emergence of freedom, value, and responsibility in the history of evolution.[73] In his considerations at the end of this book, Jonas makes clear that he would indeed appreciate a new ontological foundation of ethics:

> Ontology as the ground of ethics was the original tenet of philosophy. Their divorce, which is the divorce of the "objective" and "subjective" realms, is the modern destiny. Their reunion can be effected, if at all, only from the "objective" end, that is to say, through a revision of the idea of nature. And it is becoming rather than abiding nature which would hold out any such promise. From the immanent direction of its total evolution there may be elicited a destination of man by whose terms the person, in the act of fulfilling himself, would at the same time realize a concern of universal substance. Hence would result a principle of ethics which is ultimately grounded neither in the autonomy of the self nor in the needs of the community, but in an objective assignment by the nature of things.[74]

From Jonas's point of view, philosophy of nature should contribute to ethical theory in at least two regards: First, it should enforce the intuition that biological life as such is valuable. Second, it should help to fulfill the task of ascribing graded values to different forms of life. While for Levinas the spontaneous intuition of value carries the whole burden of ethical justification, since, according to him, the idea of human order emanates directly from the face, Jonas considers necessary—and also possible—a philosophical sublation of value-intuitions in terms of a new ontology of nature. Thus for him, the difference between the other, who by his face appears in the role of a you, and the other, seen as a third person, has nothing of a dangerous abyss. The immediately evident value-intuitions may be generalized and adjusted by means of

[72] See Micha H. Werner, "Dimensionen der Verantwortung: Ein Werkstattbericht zur Zukunftsethik von Hans Jonas," in *Ethik für die Zukunft: Im Diskurs mit Hans Jonas*, ed. Dietrich Böhler (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1994), 303–38.

[73] See the contribution of Strachan Donnelley in this volume.

[74] Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 283.

embedding them into a comprehensive phenomenological philosophy of the development of nature.

So far it seems that Jonas's approach is both basically similar and substantially different from that of Buber and Levinas. It is similar insofar as he tries to overcome the subject-object dichotomy of the Kantian world of appearances by referring to a non-scientific form of experience, which occurs in relation to another animate being and allows for an immediate access to value and immediately manifests responsibility for an encountered being. It is substantially different insofar as Jonas does not reintroduce a new dichotomy—a dichotomy between the I-You relation and the I-It relation, between Totality and Infinity, between ontology and metaphysics and the like. Or so it seems at first sight.

7. *Bipolarity and Asymmetry in Jonas's Account of Responsibility*

However, if we scrutinize the passage from *The Phenomenon of Life* I have quoted before, we will come to the conclusion that Jonas does not claim to have yet accomplished the task of espousing the objective with the subjective realm. We also find a certain asymmetry insofar as Jonas states that the initiative to remarriage has to "be effected... from the "objective" end, that is to say, through a revision of the idea of nature." But what exactly does that mean? It seems that we primarily have to obtain a new interpretation of nature—an interpretation which overcomes the Humean distinction between facts and values—and only afterwards discover our subjective obligations toward different natural beings. Ethical authority would thus lie in the object of responsibility, which obliges us by its own intrinsic value, not in the subject, its consciousness, a Buberian sphere "between" subject and object (or co-subject), and also not a third entity besides subject and object. But is this interpretation correct? In order to verify it, we shall have a look at Jonas's detailed theory of responsibility in the fourth chapter of *The Imperative of Responsibility*. The concept of responsibility which Jonas develops here is characterized, inter alia, by four features:

(1) Jonas distinguishes between "natural" and "contractual responsibility."[75] The former results from the intrinsic value of animate beings,

[75] Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility*, 94. Capitalization removed.

as in the case of the newborn, while the latter "draws its binding force from . . . agreement."[76] Since the obligation to abide by a contract cannot itself spring from agreement, contractual responsibility is dependent of natural responsibility: "If there were no responsibility 'by nature' there could be none 'by contract.'"[77]

(2) Jonas differentiates between "formal responsibility" and "substantive responsibility."[78] "Formal responsibility" stands for the "causal attribution of deeds done."[79] Following Jonas, this type of responsibility is always retrospective. It is attributed without any reference to values or norms and has to be regarded as ethically neutral. In contrast, the second type of responsibility is a "substantive, goal-committed concept,"[80] which comprises moral duties. According to Jonas, this morally substantive concept of responsibility is always prospective. Thus there is a first type of asymmetry in Jonas's account of responsibility, since the retrospective responsibility is ethically neutral while the prospective responsibility is not.

(3) Jonas construes moral responsibility as a bipolar relation, as a relation between subject and object. As mentioned above, Jonas does not explicitly address the question of the instance of responsibility in *The Imperative of Responsibility*, but does so in a later work. There he verifies our assumption of the priority of the objective realm, which he states at the end of *The Phenomenon of Life* has implications for the theory of responsibility, since he answers the question of where to find the "obliging instance" of moral responsibility by identifying the instance (the "to") of responsibility with its object (its "to").[81] Thus following Jonas there is no need to introduce a third element into the relation of responsibility besides subject and object.

(4) According to Jonas, responsibility—at least "natural" responsibility—is an asymmetric and even "nonreciprocal"[82] relation. This second type of asymmetry again has two correlative aspects: On the one hand, it is the intrinsic value of the object which imposes on the subject the obligation to care for it. Thus the object has a kind of "normative authority" over the subject. On the other hand, natural responsibility

[76] Ibid., 95.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid., 90, 92. Capitalization removed.
[79] Ibid., 90. Capitalization removed.
[80] Ibid., 93.
[81] See Jonas, *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, 131.
[82] Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility*, 94. Capitalization removed.

emerges only as a result of a converse asymmetry, namely an asymmetry of power. It is only because the subject has power over the object that the former is responsible for the latter.[83] Thus the relationship between parents and their children can be understood as the paradigm of moral responsibility.

None of these four points is trivial. The first element of Jonas's analysis combines a relatively uncontroversial distinction (between moral and contractual responsibility) with Jonas's very specific interpretation of moral responsibility as a kind of obligation, "where the immanent 'ought-to-be' of the object claims its agent *a priori* and quite unilaterally."[84] Second, while the distinction between retrospective and prospective responsibility is unproblematic, the assumption that the retrospective type of responsibility is ethically neutral and that any form of substantive responsibility must be prospective is not. Of course, causal relations are crucial for the ascription of retrospective responsibility, but retrospective personal responsibility cannot be reduced to causality. This seems obvious at least in the case of omissions: While there are uncountable events we do not impede even if we have the power to do so, we are held responsible for just a few of them. It also seems natural to assume a symmetric relation between prospective and retrospective ascriptions of responsibility: a lifeguard may be held (retrospectively) responsible for a swimmer's death not only because of his behavior and its causal consequences but also because he was (prospectively) responsible for the swimmer's life. In my opinion there are good reasons to assume that we can find this kind of symmetry in any type of personal responsibility and hence that any ascription of "retrospective" personal responsibility refers to "prospective" normative standards, but I can not substantiate that claim in enough detail here.[85] By all means, it seems hard to dispute that at least some types of retrospective responsibility are normatively substantial.[86]

[83] See ibid., 94.
[84] Ibid., 95.
[85] See Micha H. Werner, *Diskursethik als Maximenethik: Von der Prinzipienbegründung zur Handlungsorientierung* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2003), sect. 3.1.
[86] If it is permitted to pose a heretical question, one could ask if Jonas's assumption of the general ethical neutrality of retrospective responsibility and the focus on responsibility for future generations might have been one feature of his ethical account which unconsciously contributed to its attractiveness in post-Shoah Germany. This, of course, would have had nothing to do with Jonas's philosophical intentions, nor would it diminish the importance of his *Ethics for the Technological Age*. For further aspects of the reception of Jonas's work in Germany, see Wolin, *Heidegger's Children*, 123ff.

The third and fourth points are especially relevant for our inquiry, since the identification of the instance of moral responsibility with its object leads to a *bipolar* and *asymmetric* account of responsibility which in a structural respect is obviously similar to Buber's and even more so to Levinas's interpretation of responsibility. Jonas's twofold assumption of asymmetry—that the object of responsibility holds the position of normative authority while it is at the same time at the mercy of the subject—strongly reminds us of Levinas's analysis of our relation to the other, who on the one hand holds the position of ethical "height," while he on the other hand meets us as the stranger, the widow, the orphan, and the poor. This analogy is barely accidental. The primal intuitionism in Jonas's ethics leads to the same constellation which we know from Levinas: Since the relation between subject and object (me and my neighbor or the parent and his newborn) is an immediate one—a relation without any linguistic intermediation and also without interference of any third (co-)subject or other entities—the instance of responsibility has to be identified either with the subject or with the object of responsibility. And since the role of ethics is to guide the subject's conduct and to set limits to its egoism, it does not come as a surprise that Jonas also chooses to identify the instance of responsibility with the object.

But one may argue that the criterion of moral responsibility cannot be any arbitrary claim of a concrete other or any arbitrary need of a concrete living being. Thus Levinas and Jonas both have to show that the claims of the object or the concrete other are not at all arbitrary but that they somehow bring into play the pivotal standards of ethics. So Levinas takes refuge in the assumption that the ethical command is somehow already inscribed in the face of the other and that "the dimension of the divine opens forth from the human face."[87] Jonas, however, is more reluctant to refer to theological motifs. As we have already seen, he tries to support, integrate, and rank our intuitions by embedding them in a capacious philosophy of nature. Within the framework of an elaborated naturalistic value-theory, the ethical importance of the needs of any living being would be settled by appeal to its status within the unity of nature. According to Jonas, this status should be extracted from the history of nature or, in his own words,

[87] Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 78.

from the "direction of [the] total evolution"[88] of nature as a whole. This reference to a teleological concept of nature[89] is not theological by itself nor dependent of theological convictions even though it is closely connected to Jonas's philosophy of religion, namely to his theory of an emergent God, immanent to the world.[90]

However, Jonas seems to have had doubts about the tenability or at least about the possible acceptance of a fully elaborated naturalistic conception of ethics. That his concept of ethical naturalism remained programmatic and hypothetical is also indicated by the grammatical form of the crucial sentences at the end of *The Phenomenon of Life* ("there *may be* elicited a destination of man.... Hence *would* result a principle of ethics").[91] Jonas's caution seems reasonable, since any effort to ground ethics on a teleological philosophy of nature is burdened with at least three severe problems, concerning the *justification*, *content*, and *scope* of the resulting notion of ethics. The problem of *justification* lies in the fact that any teleological account of nature remains speculative: Since nature does not speak to us, we can never be sure if our ascription of intrinsic goals is not simply an anthropomorphic projection. Any teleological notion of nature is just an interpretation—it may be (more or less) plausible, but it can never be compelling. Therefore even the alliance of intuitionism and naturalism cannot lead to a sufficient justification.[92] Jonas explicitly concedes the speculative character of his philosophy of nature and he also draws its ethical consequences. Thus he admits that his argument cannot "achieve more than to justify an *option* which, by its inner persuasiveness, it offers to the thoughtful."[93] The second problem, the problem of *content*, arises as soon as one tries to accomplish Hans Jonas's program of reestablishing a modern variant

[88] Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 283.

[89] See ibid., chap. 2.

[90] Hans Jonas, *Mortality and Morality: A Search for the Good After Auschwitz*, ed. Lawrence Vogel (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1996); and see Vogel, "Jewish Philosophies After Heidegger," 125ff.

[91] Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 283; emphasis added.

[92] See inter alia Dietrich Böhler, "Hans Jonas—Stationen, Einsichten, und Herausforderungen eines Denklebens," in Böhler, ed., *Ethik für die Zukunft*, 45–67; Ralf-Peter Koschut, *Strukturen der Verantwortung: Eine kritische Auseinandersetzung mit Theorien über den Begriff der Verantwortung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Spannungsfeldes zwischen der ethisch-personalen und der kollektiv-sozialen Dimension menschlichen Handelns* (Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang, 1989), esp. 337ff.; Wolfgang E. Müller, *Der Begriff der Verantwortung bei Hans Jonas* (Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum, 1988), 67ff.; Werner, "Dimensionen der Verantwortung," 316ff.

[93] Jonas, *Philosophische Untersuchungen*, 140. My translation.

of the ancient *scala naturae*, an axiological hierarchy of animate beings. Definitely, philosophy of nature has to leave the history of natural evolution as it is. If we want to interpret evolution as a teleological process, we cannot help but interpret it as a kind of success story. But if we would do so, how would we escape the danger of a false theodicy of natural evolution—the danger of not only legitimizing but glorifying what Darwin called "natural selection," including all the losses and pains inevitably associated with it? How could we avert a neo-Darwinian approach to ethics? Even if we could find a solution to the former problem it seems doubtful that any philosophy of nature could provide ethical measures which are sufficient for the *whole scope* of social ethics. It seems doubtful if any philosophy of nature can offer a convincing interpretation of justice or give measures for the legitimacy of political institutions.[94]

8. *Another Dichotomy, at Last: Jonas's "New Imperatives" versus "Traditional Ethics"*

Whatever his reasons might have been, Jonas decided *not* to build his concept of *Ethics for the Technological Age* upon an all-embracing concept of naturalistic axiology. In fact, he restricts the content of his ethics of responsibility to a moral minimum. Its pivotal principle is the imperative to "act so that the effects of your action are compatible with the permanence of genuine human life."[95] Thus Jonas proposes his imperative of responsibility explicitly not as a *substitute* but merely as a *supplement* for the traditional ethics of interpersonal relations. Here is another definite difference to Levinas, who focuses clearly on relations of proximity, while trying to give an overall account of ethics (including not only responsibility but also justice). Jonas's ethics, in contrast, gives an account of global responsibility for the existence and "wholeness"[96]

[94] The political connotations of Jonas's paternalistic concept of "natural responsibility" have often been mentioned; see inter alia Wolin, *Heidegger's Children*, 120ff.; Matthias Kettner, "Verantwortung als Moralprinzip: Eine kritische Betrachtung der Verantwortungsethik von Hans Jonas," *Bijdragen: Tijdschrift voor Filosofie en Theologie* 51 (1990): 418–39.

[95] Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility*, 11.

[96] Ibid.

of humankind.[97] Jonas's imperative of responsibility is not designed to compete directly against what Jonas calls traditional ethics, against Kant's practical philosophy or other universalistic and justice-centered conceptions of normative ethics. Unlike Levinas, Jonas does not rebut universalism.

Perhaps one could also describe Jonas's turn to a more specific conception of ethics as a kind of "transcendental turn" since he restricts the content of our responsibility to the basic *conditions of possibility of any value*. This turn to a narrow notion of responsibility helps to avoid problems of a comprehensive approach of "ontological ethics," some of which we have adumbrated above. In addition, it strengthens the force of its obligations, since, as Jonas himself states, only a supporter of nirvana could reject his imperative to preserve humankind.[98] But Jonas's "transcendental turn" may also have a downside, as the concept of a supplementary ethics raises new questions regarding ethical universalism. For it is not clear how the ethics of interpersonal relations, which Jonas calls traditional ethics, should be intermediated with his new ethics of global responsibility. Here lies a difficulty, which in a certain way recalls Levinas's problem of intermediating between responsibility for the other and justice to third persons. Thus even if Jonas does not adopt Buber's and Levinas's radically dualistic epistemology, his intuitionism and the resulting bipolar interpretation of moral responsibility finally lead to a problematic form of dichotomy also in Jonas's ethics. For as Jonas and Levinas conceive responsibility as a relation between just two poles—between me and the other or between subject and object—and identify the instance of moral responsibility with the object or the other, they can hardly unclose this relation for possible claims of others or also for ethical considerations, based on another type of moral philosophy. How could we reconcile our obligation to preserve humankind (and thus to avoid any risks to its existence or essence) with rights to justice, political participation, or other civil rights? How could

[97] See Walter Lesch, "Ethische Argumentation im jüdischen Kontext: Zum Verständnis von Ethik bei Emmanuel Levinas und Hans Jonas," *Freiburger Zeitschrift für Philosophie und Theologie* 38 (1991): 443–69.

[98] See Hans Jonas, "Der ethischen Perspektive muß eine neue Dimension hinzugefügt werden: Hans Jonas im Gespräch mit Mischka Dammaschke, Horst Gronke, und Christoph Schulte," in Böhler, ed., *Ethik für die Zukunft*, 34–44, here 39.

we intermediate Jonas's principle of preservation with a principle of political emancipation?[99]

However, there are arguments in the work of Hans Jonas which may open up a way out of those problems. So he proposes as an argument against any action which endangers the existence of humanity, that we never can assume the consent of future generations to their non-existence.[100] While this argument does not conflict at all with his equation of the object and the instance of responsibility, it nevertheless signifies an important amendment, since it adds a third source of moral justification besides moral intuition and the philosophical reflection on the history of nature, namely, the rational consent of the community of humankind. Since Jonas's argument not simply relies on the stoic concept of *consensus gentium* but (in a quasi-Kantian way) states as a criterion of the moral rightness of an action the possible rational consent of those affected, it may indeed give a hint of how we can do justice to the competing intuitions of categoricity and universalism, autonomy and alterity. And it may also give a clue as to how we could intermediate between the traditional ethics of interpersonal relations and Jonas's imperative of responsibility for terrestrial life as a whole. After all, it is the richness we find throughout Jonas's considerations and his ability to carefully realize the specific scope of individual arguments which characterize him not only as a seminal thinker of responsibility but also as a deeply responsible thinker.

[99] See Karl-Otto Apel, "Macroethics, Responsibility for the Future, and the Crisis of Technological Society: Reflections on Hans Jonas," in idem, *Selected Essays*, vol. II (New York: Humanities Press, 1996), 219–49.

[100] Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility*, 37.

CHAPTER TEN

HANS JONAS AND SECULAR RELIGIOSITY

Ron Margolin

Forward

The epilogue to the English version of Hans Jonas's *The Gnostic Religion*[1] reveals the connection between his studies of Gnosticism and his thoughts on modern nihilism and the problem of existential philosophy. Significantly, the same chapter, titled "Gnosticism, Existentialism, and Nihilism" was included in another of his books, *The Phenomenon of Life: Toward a Philosophical Biology*,[2] in which he elucidates the existential background of the moral weaknesses that have endangered humanity and the planet since World War II. Jonas opens this chapter with an insight into the modern human condition:

> Gone is the cosmos with whose immanent logic my own can feel kinship, gone the order of the whole in which man has his place. That place appears now as a sheer and brute accident.... With the ejection of teleology from the system of natural causes, nature, itself purposeless, ceased to provide any sanction to possible human purposes. A Universe without an intrinsic hierarchy of being, as the Copernican universe is, leaves values ontologically unsupported, and the self is thrown back entirely upon itself in its quest for meaning and value.... As functions of the will, ends are solely my own creation. Will replaces vision; temporality of the act ousts the eternity of the "good in itself." This is the Nietzschean phase of the situation in which European nihilism breaks the surface. Now man is alone with himself.[3]

This scientific concept of nature as "fact alien to value" is at the core of modern nihilism. Jonas summarizes the crisis of modern man thus:

[1] Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity* (London: Routledge, 1992), 230–40.

[2] Hans Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life: Toward a Philosophical Biology* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2001), 211–34.

[3] Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion*, 323–24.

"Reason triumphant through science has destroyed the faith in revelation, without, however, replacing revelation in the office of guiding our ultimate choices."[4] This is by no means a call for a return to religion, nor did Jonas believe religion per se could solve the ethical problems modern science and technology have brought upon humanity. In *The Imperative of Responsibility* he explains why religion and classical ethics afford no solutions to the long-term problems engendered by contemporary science and technology, such as the consequences of genetic manipulation, the extension of the life span, and ecological damage.[5] One of the tenets of secularism today is that religion cannot cope with situations that did not exist when the religions of revelation were developing.

The new ethics Jonas elaborated (particularly in *The Imperative of Responsibility*) took on a function which religion could no longer fulfill, that of holding humanity accountable to future generations and safeguarding the planet from irresponsible uses of science and technology. "Religion in eclipse cannot relieve ethics of its task; and while of faith it can be said that as a moving force it either is there or is not, of ethics it is true to say that it must be there."[6] These assertions on the important task of a new and alternative ethics in the modern world raise questions as to why Jonas wrote so extensively about theological issues and the contemporary meanings of religious texts.[7]

[4] Hans Jonas, "Contemporary Problems in Ethics from a Jewish Perspective," in *Philosophical Essays: From Ancient Creed to Technological Man* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1974), 168–82, here, 168–69.

[5] Hans Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 1–23.

[6] Ibid., 23.

[7] Jonas's most essential ideas on the possibility of religious belief today can be found in these articles: "Immortality and the Modern Temper," first published in 1962; "The Concept of God after Auschwitz: A Jewish Voice," first published in 1968 and with changes in 1984; "Is Faith Still Possible? Memories of Rudolph Bultmann and Reflections on the Philosophical Aspects of His Work," written in 1977; and "Matter, Mind, and Creation: Cosmological Evidence and Cosmogonic Speculation," first published in 1988. All these are in Hans Jonas, *Morality and Mortality: A Search for the Good after Auschwitz* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 115–97. See also Jonas, "Contemporary Problems in Ethic from a Jewish Perspective,"; *Philosophical Essays*, 168–82; Hans Jonas, "Vergangenheit und Wahrheit: Ein später Nachtrag zu den sogenannten Gottesbeweisen," in idem, *Gedanken über Gott* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1994), 5–25 (first published 1990/91); Hans Jonas, "Heidegger and Theology," in idem, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 235–61 (paper delivered in 1964).

In the first stage of his assault against nihilism and particularly Heidegger's existentialism in *Being and Time*, Jonas argued that value is pervasive in the natural order, and later on completed his rejoinder with ontological and theological arguments.[8] Were these theological speculations on the possibility of transcendental reality behind the immanency of the world merely "a luxury of reason," as Jonas himself argued, following Kant?[9] In this article, I would like to claim that Jonas developed a form of secularism that includes elements of religiosity in order to integrate a science devoid of values with certain religious ideas necessary for the survival of humanity and the world. Jonas's speculations may be "a luxury of reason," but he himself believed they conveyed meaning to our existence without contradicting reason. This way of thinking is typical of what I shall call "secular religiosity."

1. *Secular Religiosity*

The concept of "secular religiosity" as used here means rational scientific thought combined with elements of religious existentialism. It is a style of thought and behavior not identifiable with religion and tradition nor yet wholly atheistic, and refers to a phenomenon of the modern world where a growing number of people from both secular and religious backgrounds have rejected the Orthodox way of life but are nevertheless drawn to religion, not out of nostalgia or respect for tradition or nationalism, but out of a need to integrate specific religious content with certain components of secular thought.

According to the German philosopher and sociologist, Georg Simmel (1858–1918), the relationship of religion to religiosity can be likened to that between perception and causality. Just as perception does not create causality, but causality causes perception, so religion does not condition religiosity, but religiosity begets religion. The experiences humans encounter in a certain inner mood stir relations, meanings, and sentiments, which often themselves are not yet religion, nor do their realities in any way conform to the religion of a differently attuned soul; but divested of this reality and forming in themselves a sphere of

[8] See Lawrence Vogel, "Foreword," in *The Phenomenon of Life*, xi–xxi, here xix.

[9] Idem, "Exodus: From German Existentialist to Post-Holocaust Theology," in Jonas, *Morality and Mortality*, 1–40, especially 3, 22–30.

objectivity, they became "religion," which here means "the objectified world of faith."[10]

Simmel's understanding of religiosity had a vast influence on those thinkers who were searching for a bridge between Kantian rationalism and the religious elements of romanticism. For example, William James drew the distinction between objectified religion, or institutional religion as he calls it (involving set dogmas, power struggles, inner politics, traditions, etc.), and personal religion (consisting of religious experiences, individual and creative religious thoughts, etc.).[11] Buber, who was Simmel's student, likewise developed his own distinction between religion and religiosity, in which the latter denotes religious feeling and creative, religious thought, as opposed to religion and especially institutional religion.[12] Although Donald Moore has called Buber a "religious secularist,"[13] I am more inclined to describe him as a prophet of secular religiosity. The influence of Simmel on Buber and Buber's deep interest in Kantian philosophy following Hermann Cohen, notwithstanding their disputes, would seem to justify this characterization.

Buber's philosophy was not the only one of its day which might be called "secular religiosity." However, the extent to which the term is applicable to the philosophies of contemporaneous Jewish thinkers such as Hermann Cohen in old age,[14] Franz Rosenzweig, and Aaron David Gordon, all of whom grappled with the universal meaning of religious ideas, is beyond the scope of this discussion. These philosophers, whom I associate with secular religiosity, were not unwilling to speak about God from a subjective and emotional point of view, and several of them exerted an influence upon Jonas as a young intellectual Zionist as he states in his own memoirs.[15]

[10] George Simmel, *Sociology of Religion*, trans. Curt Rosenthal (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), 11.

[11] William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Barnes & Noble Classics, 2004), second lecture, 35–41.

[12] Martin Buber, "Jewish Religiosity," in *On Judaism*, ed. Nahum N. Glatzer, trans. Eva Jospe (New York: Schocken, 1973), 79–94.

[13] Donald J. Moore, *Martin Buber: Prophet of Religious Secularism* (Philadelphia: Fordham University, 1974).

[14] On Cohen's transition from his philosophical idea of God to his more emotional and subjective approach to God, see Martin Buber, *Eclipse of God: Studies in the Relation between Religion and Philosophy* (New York: Harper, 1957), 52–62.

[15] See Hans Jonas, *Erinnerungen*, based on conversations with Rachel Salamander, ed. Christian Wiese (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 2003). Jonas mentions Rosenzweig (ibid., 97) and especially Buber (ibid., 53, 68, 428).

The secular religiosity of Jewish thinkers like Buber, and as I shall later show, Jonas too, is secular not merely because they chose not to live a fully halakhic or Orthodox life, but also, and perhaps chiefly, because they could not accept the traditional and heteronomic belief in the divine revelation of the Law. They did not entirely negate religion, but remained committed to secular principles such as Kant's assertion that the human mind is the source of our perceptions and conceptions, including those of religion. The biblical commandments, they claimed, whether divinely inspired or not, were formulated by the Jewish people and their leaders.

Lawrence Vogel has argued that "the concept of God implicit in Jonas's myth is compatible with the modern temper after all."[16] I shall reinforce this argument here and demonstrate that it was not only the concept of God but other ideas and values derived from it that were compatible with the modern temper. What makes Jonas's secular religiosity possible is his claim that science issues a *methodological command*, not a metaphysical proposition. Jonas expresses this point as follows: "To be sure, the overwhelming cumulative success in obeying that command stifles the thought of possible exceptions, but the concept of exceptions in no way contradicts the concepts of rules of fact. Their apodictical exclusion is itself a faith or a metaphysics."[17]

It follows, then, that modern theologians like Bultmann or even philosophers like Kant and Spinoza gave more to modern science than its due. The corollary of Jonas's approach is that transcendence can only be grasped through speculation, without the possibility of scientific proof to give it the status of knowledge.[18] This is the heart of Jonas's controversy with positivism of the Vienna circle and its heirs in America during the second half of the twentieth century. In one of his apologies concerning his theological writings as contradicting the modern prohibition on metaphysics he writes:

> Bowing to the decree that "knowledge" eludes us here, nay, even waiving this very goal from the outset, one may yet meditate on things of this nature in terms of sense and meaning. For the contention—this fashionable contention—that not even sense and meaning pertain to

[16] Vogel, "Exodus: From German Existentialism to Post-Holocaust Theology," 24.

[17] Hans Jonas, "Is Faith Still Possible? Memories of Rudolph Bultmann and Reflections on the Philosophical Aspects of His Work," in idem, *Mortality and Morality*, 144–64, here 152.

[18] Ibid., 164.

> them is easily disposed of as a circular, tautological inference from first having defined "sense" as that which in the end is verifiable by sense data or from generally equating "meaningful" with "knowable." To this axiomatic fiat by definition only he is bound who has first consented to it. He who has not is free, therefore, to work at the concept of God, even knowing that there is no proof of God, as a task of understanding, not of knowledge.[19]

This important pronouncement is based on Kant's approach to religious content, which Jonas distinguishes from that of the modern logical positivists who viewed metaphysical thinking as nonsensical. For Kant, especially in his later writings as Jonas makes clear,[20] metaphysical non-objects are the highest objects of all, and reason can never cease to be concerned with them. The fact that they are not demonstrable does not mean that there is no sense in speculating about them. To question the existence of God is to question the meaning of the world and life itself.

There is a clear similarity between Jonas's understanding of Kant's approach to metaphysical issues and Buber's understanding of Kant's approach as he described it in *Eclipse of God: Studies in the Relation between Religion and Philosophy* first published in 1952.[21] Jonas almost certainly knew this book, which includes an account of the famous controversy between Buber and Jung concerning Gnosticism.[22]

Modern science, Jonas stressed, must be objective, indifferent to moral and existential issues. We can never know what is objectively true as regards morality and meaning, but we can understand the consequences of holding a particular worldview. The immanentism of modern science and its indifference to questions of value leads to a modern form of nihilism which is replaceable by certain religious beliefs but not others. This distinction between knowledge and science on the one

[19] Hans Jonas, "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," in idem, *Mortality and Morality*, 131–43, here 132.

[20] Ibid.

[21] See Buber, *Eclipse of God*, 49–52.

[22] Buber's warm response to *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist* was very important to Jonas. He kept Buber's letter with him all his life. See Jonas, *Erinnerungen*, 149. Jonas's deep appreciation for Buber is evident in his letter of June 25, 1938, in which he wrote about Buber: "Er hat philosophische Kraft und Tiefe" (He is philosophically brave and profound), ibid., 441. Jonas delivered a lecture in Princeton on existentialism and Buber's philosophy in the presence of Buber, who visited Princeton University in 1958. See Grete Schaeder, "Martin Buber: Ein Biographischer Abriss," in *Martin Buber, Briefwechsel aus sieben Jahrzehnten*, vol. 1 (Heidelberg: Verlag Lambert Schneider, 1972), 19–141, here 128.

hand and religion and morality on the other is in the background of Jonas's unique approach to the place of myth today. The mythological mode, he argues, is the appropriate one for religious speculation, and therefore, from a religious and scientific point of view,[23] there is no logical necessity for Bultmann's call for demythologization as a means of removing the obstacle to faith created by the clash of mythological thinking with the modern world view. Just as Plato uses the language of myth to convey the unknowable, so does Jonas use it as a way of separating the scientifically provable form the speculative but spiritual and meaningful.[24]

2. *Myth and Religious Speculation*

In his elaboration on "The Emperor's New Clothes" as a parable of the Enlightenment's recognition of the unreality of religious myth,[25] Jonas demonstrates that in the subsequent reductionist or cynical age, our own, it is dogma itself, not an open-eyed child, that triumphantly declares "there is nothing there!" With our eyes so conditioned, or our "spectacles tinted" to see only what is scientifically verifiable, we can see nothing but nakedness. "The psychological atmosphere created by science and reinforced by technology is peculiarly unfavorable to the visibility of that transcendent dimension which biblical propositions claim for the nature of things."[26] This is why, in contrast to his teacher Bultmann, Jonas believed that only symbolic language could serve in speaking of God or anything else that is irreducible to ordinary speech about human concerns. The symbols of myth safeguard the mysteries of life, enabling us to see "through a glass darkly," because:

> To keep the manifest opaqueness of myth transparent to the ineffable is in a way easier than to keep the seeming transparency of the concept transparent for that to which it is in fact as opaque as any language must

[23] On the profound relationship between Jonas and his teacher Rudolf Bultmann and their controversy concerning Bultmann's idea of demythologization, see "Is Faith Still Possible," in idem, *Mortality and Morality*, 144–64.

[24] Hans Jonas, "Immortality and the Modern Temper," in idem, *Mortality and Morality*, 115–30, here 125; Jonas, "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," 134.

[25] Jonas, "Contemporary Problems," 176.

[26] Ibid., 176–77.

be. Myth taken allegorically is sophisticated objectification. Myth taken symbolically is the glass through which we darkly see.[27]

In modernity, objectification is the language of science; thus Jonas prefers to speak of matters divine in the symbolic language of myth rather than in the theoretical discourse of theology. Though myth, too, is a language of some objectification, a "projection of an existential reality which seeks its own truth in a total view of things,"[28] there is no real dichotomy between the subjectivity which, according to Jonas, is at the basis of mythology and the objectivity of mythical narrative. The symbolism of myth operates as a bridge between the subjective and the objective form of the narrative. Demythologization collapses this bridge and prevents an understanding of the subjective and existential contents of the divine aspects of myth, rendering them objectively meaningless.[29] Jonas's analysis of myth here is informed by his studies of Gnosticism and the existentialist point of view. Although Jonas himself calls his concept of God and religion "speculative theology,"[30] this is to some degree a reductive description. Myth, according to Jonas, is the most reasonable way to convey the metaphysical.

Jonas introduced his "new myth" for the first time in 1961 in "Immortality and the Modern Temper," delivered as the Ingersoll Lecture at Harvard University, and again as part of the article "The Concept of God after Auschwitz" where he explained his myth more discursively. In "Vergangenheit und Wahrheit" (Past and Truth) and "Matter, Mind, and Creation" he continued to elaborate on the meaning of this myth that stands at the core of what I have termed Jonas's "secular religiosity."

3. *Aspects of Jonas's Secular Religiosity*

Jonas's secular religiosity has five components, and all of them can be viewed as adaptations of Jewish religious values critical for the spiritual and material survival of humanity and the world.

[27] Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 261.
[28] Jonas, "Myth and Mysticism: A Study of Objectification and Interiorization in Religious Thought," in idem, *Philosophical Essays*, 291–92.
[29] See Rudolph Bultmann, *The New Testament and Mythology and Other Basic Writings*, trans. Schubert Ogden (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984).
[30] Jonas, "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," 131.

A. *God, Matter, and Mind*

Jonas discusses the question of the existence of God from at least two perspectives. In the first he reflects on the cosmos with a cosmogonic view of nature which includes anthropic evidence; the second is a reflection on culture, particularly on history as the condition for cultural existence and cultural knowledge.

a) Jonas, who understands the human mind as the final consequence of a long process of evolving subjectivity in organic nature, replaces the traditional question, "how can human beings perceive themselves as self-generating?" with the question: "Can something that is less than mind be the cause of mind?" His answer is that matter from its inception is mind asleep, and that the first cause, the truly creative cause, of mind asleep can only be mind awake. Jonas avers: "From potential mind we must infer actual mind. This is otherwise than with living things and subjectivity as such, which in accordance with the gradual nature of their occurrence, can indeed begin in a sleeping, unconscious manner and yet require no consciousness in the first cause, in the act of their physical birth."[31] Though Jonas believes, as we have seen, that it is difficult to conceive of something as non-indifferent as subjectivity to have arisen from something entirely indifferent and neutral, he finds it more reasonable to assume a "womb of matter" or "will" witnessing subjective life that is not "utterly alien to that which brought it forth, namely matter." He describes this as a tendency, a yearning as it were, "which the chance opportunities of the world seize upon and then drive forward." This "cosmogonic eros" seems closer to truth than "cosmogonic logos" in primordial matter.[32]

The term "cosmogonic eros," key to Jonas's speculations on the existence of God, derives from the theory of a suspected anti-Semite, Ludwig Klages.[33] Jonas, who volunteered for combat in the British Army

[31] Hans Jonas, "Matter, Mind, and Creation: Cosmological Evidence and Cosmogonic Speculation," in idem, *Mortality and Morality*, 165–97, here 181.
[32] Ibid., 172–73.
[33] Ludwig Klages (1872–1956), known as the founder of modern graphology, developed Nietzsche's philosophy in the direction of vitalism. Negating monotheism, vitalism came close to the pagan worldview. According to John Claverley Cartney, "[Klages's] attitude toward Judaism was negative and although his writings, too, were forbidden by the Nazi regime, he proclaimed after World War II that the Jews, after a two-thousand year long assault on the world for which they felt nothing but hatred, had actually won a definite victory. There would be no re-match. He sneered at all the kow-towing to Jewry that had already become part of the game in the immediate

and fought against the Nazis, was keenly sensitive to anti-Semitism.[34] Why, then, did he not refrain from borrowing a term that is so intrinsic to his philosophy from a controversial figure like Klages? Clearly Jonas did not understand the movement of life toward subjectivity as a negation of spirit and life as Klages saw it, and it is well known that he argued against the dualism Klages encouraged. He borrowed only a part of Klages's theory, using the term "cosmogonic eros" to denote will, not logos, as the other element connected to primal matter, in order to explain the ultimate emergence of the mind. To assume the existence of logos at the beginning of reaction is to assume a differentiated and stable system of information; and this is impossible because "information is something stored, and the 'Big Bang' had no time for storing anything."[35] However, primary will, from which life, subjectivity, and mind developed, can be assumed without contradicting the scientific theory of the Big Bang. Here we see a main tenet of Jonas's secular religiosity: one can speculate on un-provable religious ideas but one cannot use these speculations to contradict what science perceives as proven.

post-war era, because he reasoned even as a tactical ploy such sycophantic behavior was doomed to failure." In 1922, Klages published *Vom kosmogonischen Eros* in which he spoke about Eros as "the life-creating son of the Mother Goddess of the prehistoric Aegean world.... A more authentic incarnation [of this Eros] is found in the *Theogony* of Hesiod, in which the poet calls Eros one of the first beings, born without father or mother." This Eros "is to be distinguished from 'love' and 'sex,' both of which are tied to that obnoxious entity the 'self' (*Selbst*), which tends to become the center of gravity in the life of man as history progressively tears his soul form the earth, turning the richly-endowed individual into a hollow mask and robot, divorced from Eros and earth. *All Eros is Eros of distance* (*Eros der Ferne*)," said Klages, "and a moment's reflection will suffice to demonstrate that nothing is more characteristic of our modern planetary technology than its tendency toward the annihilation of distance. Likewise, the will-to-possession, the impulse for domination, and the thoughtless addiction to 'information' that characterizes modern man are all condemned by Klages as attempts to lift the veil of Isis, which he sees as the ultimate 'offense against life.'" See John Claverley Cartney, "On the Biocentric Metaphysics of Ludwig Klages," www.revilo-oliver.com/Writers/Klages/Ludwig_Klages.html.

[34] Jonas's sensitivity to anti-Semitism was not limited to Nazism and its supporters, among them his teacher Martin Heidegger. After the publication of Moshe Idel's thesis on ancient Jewish Gnosticism (see Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988], 30–32), Idel met privately in Jerusalem with Jonas (March–April 1989). Jonas, Idel has told me, expressed his objection to Idel's thesis. He could not believe that such anti-Semitic thinkers as those Gnostics could themselves be Jews. Harold Bloom told Idel that Jonas had spoken with him too about this issue.

[35] Jonas, "Matter, Mind, and Creation," 167.

Jonas's capacity for incorporating parts of a system of thought he deemed worthy while excluding other parts of the same system reveals his intellectual flexibility. He is selective, too, when it comes to Jewish beliefs, as for example when he rejects the idea of divine omnipotence and accepts the idea of the Goodness of God.[36] In his selective attitude toward philosophical ideas, Jonas resembles the Talmudic figure of Rabbi Meir who studied with the apostate teacher, Elisha ben Abuya, known in the Talmudic corpus as "Aher," namely, "The Other." The Talmud accounts for this anomalous situation by saying that "R. Meir found a pomegranate; he ate [the fruit] within it, and the peel he threw away!"[37] Jonas, too, used what seemed valuable in the philosophy of his teacher, Martin Heidegger, and disregarded the rest, just as he adopted only some of Klages's ideas, particularly his dichotomy between spirit and life.

Jonas declared that his myth "only pushes further the idea of the *tzimtzum*, that cosmogonic centerconcept of the Lurianic Kabbalah."[38] Jonas's cosmogonic eros seems to me reminiscent not only of the Lurianic doctrine of *tzimtzum* but also of another aspect of Lurianic cosmogony, namely the doctrine of *reshimu*, which refers to the residual traces or impressions of the divine light that "remain in the primeval space created by the *Tzimtzum* even after the withdrawal of the substance of En-Sof (infinity),"[39] enabling the Divine to emerge into the material world. In Jonas's myth, it is cosmogonic eros that conditions the emergence of life and subjectivity from primordial matter.

b) In "Vergangenheit und Wahrheit" (Past and Truth) Jonas discusses memory as the necessary condition for history.[40] This essay, which has not been published in English, represents the final development of Jonas's reflections on the immortality of deeds, an idea discussed first in "Immortality and the Modern Temper." The basis for the common world we share in speech and deed is the distinction we make between right and wrong concerning the past. Even though the historical events

[36] Jonas, "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," 138–41.

[37] Babylonian Talmud, *Hagigah* 15b.

[38] Jonas, "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," 142.

[39] Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), 264.

[40] See "Vergangenheit und Wahrheit," in *Gedanken über Gott*, where Jonas writes: "Man möchte von einen ewigen Gedächtnis der Dinge rede, in das alle Geschehnisse sich von selbst einschreiben—eine Art immer wachsender, automatischer Weltchronik," 22, and see also, 19–20.

this distinction refers to no longer exist in the usual sense, they must be understood to exist on some plane where their presence prevents time from becoming a mere illusion. A mental or intentional presence represents things that have disappeared. It is this presence that is eternal because it enables us to judge forever whether a statement is true or untrue. The question is where such an eternal presence can exist. Jonas speaks about the necessity for an eternal memory of all things, in which every occurrence is registered automatically as in a continuously growing world chronicle. But memory itself must dwell in a subject or spirit and be complete down to the last event and absolutely universal.

Jonas speaks of a divine postulate which is a transcendental condition for the existence of finite history. In order for our human presence to be reasonable, we must assume as posture the objective presence of the past. The past cannot exist as the continuity of things. What happened in the past must disappear into non-existence in order for the present to exist. Nevertheless, it can continue to exist in a spiritual manner, as in knowledge within a subject whose eternal presence legitimizes our use of the concept of truth with regard to the past. It is memory that preserves the particular and individual, not thought. Thought can only orbit the general and necessary. Jonas contrasts this with Plato's "space above the sky" where the eternal Forms reside, Plotinus's "intelligible cosmos" of eternal truths, and the "Absolute Spirit" of Hegel. None of these provides the transcendental and existential requirement of reason on which Jonas's theological postulate is based. Although this spirit is eternal, it emerges into being.[41]

At first glance, Jonas's God seems to be a new version of the God of the philosophers, as Pascal called God, or the dead and impersonal God, as Buber called Kant's God.[42] However, the idea of the transcendental subjective emerging into memory shows that Jonas was looking for a bridge between the dead God of the philosophers and the personal God

[41] Jonas, *Gedanken über Gott*, 24–25. I found a parallel movement from an ethical point of view in Leon Roth, "The Goodness of God," *Journal of Philosophical Studies* 2 (1926): 503–15.

[42] See Buber, *Eclipse of God*, 49–50. Jonas was well aware of the linguistic problems of theology and the philosophy of religion. "That the conceptualization and objective language of theory do not do justice, to some extent do violence, to the primary content committed to theology's care, on this there is agreement.... Much of what Buber has said about the 'I-thou' relation and its language, as distinct from the third person 'I-it' relation and its language, falls squarely into the area of our problem." Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 259.

of religion. Jonas's thought here suggests the God-who-remembers in the well-known prayer for the Jewish New Year, an idea that opens a narrow door to vivid personal relations between humans and God:

> You remember, Lord, considering the deeds of all mankind from ancient days. All thoughts are revealed to You, all secrets since the beginning of time. For You there is no forgetting, from You nothing is hidden. You remember every deed, You know every doer. You know all things, Lord, our God, and foresee events to the end of time. You have a day for bringing to judgment countless human beings and their infinite deeds.[43]

Jonas's incremental memory, able to absorb evolving nature and the deeds of humanity, refers not to the omniscient God but to the God who registers every new objective occurrence. Ultimately, when we need a solution to the paradox of history not amenable to proof, Jonas prefers the language of myth, as in the myth of the Book of Life (*sefer ha-hayyim*) and the God who remembers. The "cosmogonic eros" and "becoming memory" discussed above are perspectives of God that form the foundation of Jonas's divine speculations and are central to his secular religiosity. In "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," he speaks of five positive characteristics attributable to the God of the Jews after the Holocaust: caring, suffering, becoming, goodness, and intelligibility.[44] In a later essay Jonas conceded that this concept is no less speculative than the speculations he had earlier rejected, though it did more justice to the evidence of the universe as we can and must see it.[45]

B. *The Creation of the World*

In his article, "Jewish and Christian Elements in Philosophy," Jonas claimed that through the biblical concept of creation, Christianity introduced into Western philosophy the idea that the world had a beginning in time.

> The encounter with the biblical doctrine of creation brought to light what the (original Graeco-Roman) philosophical doctrine of the eternity of the world really meant.... In turn, the encounter with the original philosophical view elicited from the biblical doctrine its latent implications

[43] Mahzor for Rosh Ha-Shanah, Musaf service.

[44] Jonas, "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," 136–40.

[45] Jonas, "Matter, Mind, and Creation," 189.

> concerning the whole nature of reality and made these at home in philosophy as an alternative, no less philosophical, theory of the world.[46]

Jonas based his claim on Francis Bacon's statement that ancient philosophy had supposed the world to be the image of God, in contrast to biblical description, which declared it to be God's handiwork only and not his image. The impact of biblical doctrine on philosophy made a new direction of philosophy possible, "and therewith, for better or worse, the modern mind."[47] According to Jonas, the Jewish-Islamic emphasis on the will of God as the first principle of creation contributed, along with Augustine's analysis of the human will, to the rise of western metaphysics of the will. The anti-Christian culmination of this idea is evident in Nietzsche and in modern existentialism.[48] The biblical idea of a created universe means that the world had a beginning in time which makes it not only compatible with the "Big Bang Theory," but an important if indirect factor in the modern perception of human will as a driving force. Jonas claims that the greatest weakness in Heidegger's philosophy is its alienation from nature. The idea of creation brings us back to the idea that the will of human beings derives from cosmic will or the cosmogonic eros.

Jonas's myth accepts the immanentism of modernity, but unlike Spinoza's pantheism, it speaks of a creation that is not identical with biblical creation but not opposed to the principle of a created universe. Jonas expresses this idea as follows: "In order that the world might be, and be for itself, God renounced his being, divesting himself of his deity—to receive it back from the odyssey of time weighted with the chance harvest of unforeseeable temporal experience: transfigured or possibly even disfigured by it."[49] As he explained later on, this description is somewhat similar to the idea of God's self-contraction (*tzimtzum*) in Lurianic Kabbalah. There was a "Big Bang" which means a form

[46] Hans Jonas, "Jewish and Christian Elements in Philosophy: Their Share in the Emergence of the Modern Mind," in idem, *Philosophical Essays*, 21–44, here 27.

[47] Ibid., 29. See Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*, Book II, in *The Philosophical Works of Francis Bacon*, ed. J. M. Robertson (London: Routledge and Sons; New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1905), 91. Jonas spoke at the beginning of this article about the "legitimate continuation, in the medium of philosophy, of existential insights and emphases whose original locus was the world of faith, but whose validity and vitality extend beyond the reaches of faith. Some basic concepts of man and world speak through the World of God and hence inform the understanding of man as a general premise that will underlie even his worldly philosophizing." Ibid., 24.

[48] Ibid., 39.

[49] Jonas, "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," p. 134.

of creation, a moment from which the immanent process of this world began. The first organic life is described in Jonas's myth as "a tremendous quickening of concern in the eternal realm and a sudden leap in its growth toward recovery of its plenitude.... The awakening God can first pronounce creation to be good."[50]

According to Jonas, the religious doctrine of creation teaches reverence for living nature which leads to a reverence for all life.[51] This idea is critical for the future maintenance of our technological world, a world that could be destroyed by a reckless development that knows no limit. This is the idea behind Jonas's effort to bridge the gap between the biblical description of creation and its understanding in secular religiosity as explained above. The creative source of both feeling and thinking is an evolving subjectivity that wills life, as in the "beautiful attribute ascribed to God" in the Jewish prayer: *rotzeh ba-hayyim*, namely, "He who wills life," life for its own sake and "by means of the soul, as a cradle for the mind." From this proceeds the sacredness of life.[52]

C. *The Creation of Man in the Image of God*

In *The Imperative of Responsibility* Jonas tried to create a secular philosophy of nature that would span the imaginary gap between what is scientifically ascertainable and what is morally binding, what "is" versus what "ought to be." His assumption was that "What we must avoid at all cost is determined by what we must preserve at all cost, and this in turn, is predicated on the 'image of man' we entertain. Formerly, this image was enshrined in the teachings of revealed religions. With their eclipse today, secular reason must base the normative concept of man on a cogent, at the least persuasive, doctrine of general being: metaphysics must underpin ethics."[53] Here too, Jonas's discussion of a possible contemporary meaning for the idea of man can be derived from the biblical idea of man created in the image of God, so long as it is compatible with science.

The Bible deduces God's creation of man in His image from His creation of the world. Modern man can deduce the existence of God

[50] Ibid.

[51] Hans Jonas, "Contemporary Problems in Ethics from a Jewish Perspective," in idem, *Philosophical Essays*, 168–69, here 179.

[52] Jonas, "Matter, Mind, and Creation," 190.

[53] Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility*, x.

from man's own higher abilities. By meditating on the human mind, the human being's unique and higher abilities,[54] and the various freedoms of thought,[55] man deduces the transcendental roots he developed over time through a long process of evolution from primal matter.

The subjective is itself an objective fact in the world and consequently even the anthropic evidence belongs in cosmology. "As facts of the universe, human beings must be analyzed and evaluated cosmologically."[56] Thus the Divine recognized in certain "powers and experiences" of the mind, describable as "transcendent," and the soul, or rather its "highest cognitive part, reason" is able to soar beyond all nature to the realm of the Creator's intention and the knowledge of "good and evil."[57]

Jonas was aware that all philosophical proofs of God's existence based on the idea of resemblance are limited, inasmuch as instead of "moving from what it thought to thinking" they proceed "rather from thinking to its object," like Anselm's ontological argument that the most perfect of all beings, because it is thought of, must of necessity exist. The logical untenability of this was proven by Kant with whom Jonas concurs:

> The argument of resemblance in favor of the knowing subject is replaced, therefore, by the argument of sufficient reason in favor of the known object. But his proof for the existence of God also fails to stand up to logical examination, for the intentional object of an idea and the existential content of an entity—in general, consciousness and thing—can enter no quantitative comparison at all.... Yet something remains even from this failed attempt: the connection of the inner evidence of transcendence with the question of the first causes.[58]

The idea that humanity was created in the image of God has great ethical importance. From it we can draw "the principle of respect for the person, his freedom and his dignity."[59] This idea is negated by the naturalistic doctrine of evolution as it applies to the human species, demanding us to find the bridge between science and ethics. Jonas's solution to the tension between reason's limitations and the insight that must be related to these transcendental dimensions in human beings

[54] See Hans Jonas, "Tool, Image, and Grave: On What is Beyond the Animal in Man," in idem, *Mortality and Morality*, 75–86.
[55] Jonas, "Matter, Mind, and Creation," 174–77.
[56] Ibid., 177.
[57] Ibid., 178.
[58] Ibid., 178–79.
[59] Jonas, "Contemporary Problems in Ethics from a Jewish Perspective," 181.

leads him to say that "man was created 'for' the image of God father than 'in' his image."[60] The image of God as eternal, anterior even to the existence of the universe, is possible from the rationalistic and scientific point of view which Jonas adopted. Yet, the significance of man as created 'for' this image is that the image of God is itself part of the process of revelation, revealed by the direction of evolution and through the sublime aspects of human life.

The ability to discriminate between good and evil implies the capacity for doing good and evil. The "eros" that motivates our choices among various goods "offers no guarantee as a guide for glimpsing and pursuing its true object." And yet it is here, "where the deepest abyss of the perversion of insight and will yawn open, is also the place where the highest pinnacle of holiness of will and consecration of life to the commanding good towers up to heaven and casts its celestial brilliance over our earthly throng—the transfiguration of the temporal by a moment of eternity."[61] Only by understanding the idea of creation in the image of God as a burden, as a command to imitate the divine likeness, can man's dignity find proof. Betrayal of his likeness "overwhelmingly outweighs faithfulness to it." Without this likeness, "we would have to despair before the procession of those things in world history that refute this image, before this mixture of cruelty and stupidity; I daresay. We would have to despair of the very meaning of the human adventure."[62]

D. *Commandments and Immortality*

In *The Imperative of Responsibility* Jonas formulates the modern imperative, or "commandment," that although we may risk our own life, we have no right to risk the existence of humanity and future generations for the sake of a better life now.[63] Jonas is aware of the ambiguity of this "commandment," and he hastens to explain: "To underpin this proposition theoretically is by no means easy and without religion perhaps impossible. At present, our imperative simply posits it without proof, as an axiom."[64] Jonas's proof of the imperative is based on the

[60] Jonas, "Immortality and the Modern Temper," 128.
[61] Jonas, "Matter, Mind, and Creation," 175.
[62] Ibid., 182–83.
[63] Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility*, 11.
[64] Ibid., 12.

Good-in-itself, without reliance on an external religious authority such as the Will of God. Like Kant, Jonas prefers autonomy to heteronomy.[65] Nevertheless, he is aware that modern secular society has not succeeded in persuading the masses to fulfill this imperative. Given his research on Gnosticism, Jonas was aware of the *Deus absconditus*, but regarded such a conception of God as profoundly un-Jewish. As he argues in "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," the existence of the commandments means God is intelligible and that His intentions and will are understandable too:

> The Torah rests on the premise and insists that we can understand God, not completely, to be sure, but something of him—of his will, intentions, and even nature—because he has told us. There has been revelation, we have his commandments and his law, and he has directly communicated with some—his prophets—as his mouth for all men in the language of men and their times: refracted thus in this limiting medium but not veiled in dark mystery.[66]

Jonas finds two perspectives for the religious term "commandment"—divine and human—and he proceeds from there to explain his interpretation of the term "revelation," which religion considers the source of God's commandments:

> From the fact of our thinking about what is true or what commands beyond time there follows a corresponding dimension beyond time in our essence. Logically we are not able to make this conclusion our own, but this much remains to be considered. When the timeless truth of his theorem dawned on Pythagoras, moving him profoundly, when the prophets of Israel first perceived the unconditioned character of the ethical demand as the world of God, and when at similar moments in other cultures the same thing occurred, there opened up an horizon of transcendence is immanent: an horizon which, going beyond what has directly been said within it, has something to say about the character of the being in which the opening occurs—and this being is as much that of perceiving as it is that of what is perceived.[67]

[65] The following paragraph expresses the point succinctly: "To ground the 'good' or 'value' in being it was necessary to bridge the alleged chasm between 'is' and 'ought.' For the good or valuable, when it is this of itself and not just by grace of someone's desiring, needing, or choosing, is by its very concept a thing whose being possible entails the demand for its being or becoming actual and thus turns into an 'ought' when a will is present which can hear the demand and translate it into action. Thus we say that a 'command' can issue not only from a commanding will, for instance, of a personal God, but also from the immanent claim of a good-in-itself to its realization. If, however, the 'good' or 'value' is indeed something by itself, then it belongs to the stock of being in general (not therefore necessarily to the actuality of what happens to exist at a given time), and, in that case, axiology becomes a part of ontology." Ibid., 79.

[66] Jonas, "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," 140.

What seems to be revelation is the human experience of transcendental content bursting into the immanent of life itself. For modern man the content of this revelation consists more of negative commandments than positive ones. Jonas reminds us that the Ten Commandments are mostly prohibitions and not positive commandments. The problem in modernity is an excess of power to "do" and therefore the negative aspect of the commandments is better suited to modern needs. "Overwhelmed by our own possibilities—an unprecedented situation this—we need first of all criteria for rejection. There is reasonable consensus on what decency, honesty, justice, charity bid us to do in given circumstances, but great confusion on what we are permitted to do of the many things that have become feasible to us and some of which we must not do on any account."[68]

The second perspective relates to Jonas's postulate of subjectivity and divine memory. In the traditional view of the ancient Sages, the commandments point the way to heaven or to hell. The modern human being has difficulty accepting such notions, but Jonas held that humanity has not entirely lost the possibility of touching immortality. "In moments of decision, when our whole being is involved, we feel as if acting under the eyes of eternity." The feeling is expressed in symbols according to various cherished beliefs, for instance, that "what we do now will make an indelible entry in the 'book of life,' or leave an indelible mark in a transcendent order," or that it will "affect that order, if not our own destiny, for good or for evil; that we shall be accountable for it before a timeless seat of justice, or if we are not there for the accounting, because we have flowed down the river of time—that our eternal image is determined by our present deed, and that through what we do to that image of ours here and now, we are responsible for the spiritual totality of images."[69] Thus, "our link to eternity is not the *nunc stans*, the 'standing now,' in which the mystic tastes release from the movement of time, but moment as the momentum-giving motor of that very movement." Thus, too, what lasts the shortest time and

[67] Jonas, "Matter, Mind, and Creation," 178.

[68] Jonas, "Contemporary Problems in Ethics from a Jewish Perspective," 181.

[69] Jonas, "Immortality and the Modern Temper," 120.

is "intrinsically most adverse to lastingness" may turn out to be that which "binds the mortal to the immortal."[70]

E. *Responsibility as Secular Religiosity*

Jonas's ideas about responsibility do not hinge on religion but on the new ethical conclusions he formulated, based on the natural parental responsibility for progeny. Nevertheless, it was important for him to reinforce the principle of responsibility and deepen its foundations by reflecting on the meaning of creation in the divine image:

> If man was created "for" the image of God, rather than "in" his image—if our lives becomes lines in the divine countenance—then our responsibility is not defined in mundane terms alone, by which often it is inconsequential enough, but registers in a dimension where efficacy follows transcausal norms of inner essence.... Our impact on eternity is for good and for evil.[71]

But we must see and hear this good and evil as witnesses "against the doctrine of a nature devoid of values and goals. What we hear is the call of the good that we have seen, its indwelling claim on human existence." Our duty then becomes "acute and concrete with the growth of human power through technology, which endangers the entire habitat of life here on Earth." Therefore, we must protect the "divine cause" from our own destructiveness. "We must come to the aid of the deity who has become powerless for Himself regarding us. It is the duty of power that knows, a cosmic duty, for it is a cosmic experiment, which we can wreck along with ourselves and spoil within ourselves."[72]

Jonas goes even further to claim that the idea of an eternal memory wherein all things and all deeds are registered is essential to a philosophy of history. This understanding reflects a type of religiosity which can supply a metaphysical underpinning to responsibility. The recognition of the eternality of our deeds implies that we are not alone but part of a whole. Thus we bear responsibility toward this whole for the consequences of our deeds.

[70] Ibid., 121–22.
[71] Ibid., 128.
[72] Jonas, "Matter, Mind, and Creation," 191.

Some Notes in Conclusion

It has been claimed that God is totally self-effacing in Jonas's myth,[73] an indication that Jonas never fully rejected the dualism of the Gnostics and their notion of a hidden God. Yet despite his appreciation of the cultural contribution of all forms of inwardness, from the Gnostics to Kierkegaard, Jonas could not accept their dualism.[74] He was clearly interested in human responsibility for the future maintenance of life in this world as opposed to the Gnostics' indifference to it. His desire to embrace modern theories of evolution that contradict the concept of divine intervention in biological phenomena did not prevent him from seeking traces of the divine in life itself. Although he went "even further than the Kabbalah, holding that God's contraction is total so far as physical power is concerned,"[75] I claim that his cosmogonic eros and his objection to cosmogonic logos is reminiscent not only of the Lurianic idea of *tzimtzum* or contraction but also of Luria's idea of *reshimu*, or divine impression,[76] which neutralizes the idea of the hidden God of Gnosticism. The positive characteristics he attributes to God in "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," as mentioned above,[77] is further evidence of his objection to the world denial of the extreme form of Gnosticism. In the idea of the suffering God, however, there are traces of the weaker form of Gnosticism found in Kabbalah and more specifically in the Lurianic idea of *tzimtzum*. Had Jonas chanced upon the sermons of Rabbi Kalonimos Kalmish Shapira of Piasechna, of the last Hasidic leaders in the Warsaw Ghetto, he would have found support for his way of thinking:

> For behold! A Jew, tortured in his suffering, may think he is the only one in pain, as though his individual, personal pain, and the pain of all other Jews, has no affect Above, God forbid, as the verse [Isaiah 63:9] says, "In all their pain is His pain," and as we learn in the Talmud (Hagigah 15b) in the name of R. Meir, "When a person suffers, to what expression does the Shechinah (divine) give utterance? 'O woe! My head, O woe! My Arms.'" In sacred literature we learn that God, as it were, suffers the pain of a Jew much more than that person himself feels it.... And so, the world continues to exist steadfast, it is not obliterated by God's pain

[73] Vogel, "Hans Jonas's Exodus," 26.
[74] Jonas, "Matter, Mind, and Creation," 171.
[75] Vogel, "Hans Jonas's Exodus," 26.
[76] See above, n. 39.
[77] See above, n. 44.

> and His voice at the suffering of his people and the destruction of His house, because God's pain never enters into the world.[78]

Like Rabbi Kalonimos Shapira, Jonas speaks of a suffering God who identifies with the suffering of His people who stand facing the silent world He created, yet He is unable to stop the evil caused by the independent creatures who have stopped hearing His voice. Although God is the source of all that is good and meaningful in this world, His world is indifferent to His suffering. This paradox is typical of Jewish sources, particularly those influenced by Kabbalah. What philosophy cannot permit, the language of myth can.

Jonas's God, like the God of the philosophers, may at first glance seem deaf to prayer or supplication, as He did to the Roman Catholic theologian Hans Küng, who argued in agreement with the British rabbi and scholar of Hasidism, Louis Jacob, that a weak God like Jonas's, who needs the help of human beings, could not have inspired faith in the inmates of Auschwitz.[79] It was probably in answer to this dilemma that Jonas referred to Etty Hillesum and the diary she kept at Westerbork before being sent to Auschwitz. In "Matter, Mind, and Creation" Jonas quotes the prayer which forms the religious climax of Hillesum's diary, in which she promises to help God even though she knows He cannot help her. "In so doing we ultimately help ourselves.... We must help you and defend up to the last your dwelling within us."[80] A weak God could indeed be an object of human prayer, even in the camps. Jonas saw this prayer as testimony that even in the midst of the Holocaust the idea of a suffering God had an existential and religious meaning. Hillesum's prayer resembles Hasidic prayers for the benefit of the Shekhinah (the Divine Presence) as opposed to ordinary prayers for self-benefit. The early Hasidic teachers had asked whether or not a person could pray on his own behalf and although there were conflicting traditions among them, they all expressed reservations concerning petitionary prayer.[81] The Maggid of Mezhirech,[82] who preferred contemplative mystical prayer, also speaks of prayer for the sake of heaven as Hillesum did later: "Let not a person pray for his own needs and requirements but always for the Shekhinah that She may be redeemed from her exile."[83]

A prayer for the sake of heaven, argued the first teachers of Hasidism, is loftier than a prayer for one's own sake.[84] Moreover, the idea of the human temple found in kabbalistic and Hasidic sources[85] became the subject of Etty Hillesum's prayer too. In her words, "Every one must be turned into a dwelling dedicated to You, oh God. And I promise You, yes, I promise that I shall try to find a dwelling and a refuge for You in as many houses as possible."[86] No less important is the end of this paragraph, not quoted by Jonas, in which Hillesum gives her explanation for the role of prayer: "You are sure to go through lean times with me now and then, when my faith weakens a little, but believe me, I shall always labor for You and remain faithful to You, and I shall

[78] Rabbi Kalonymos Kalmish Shapira, *Sacred Fire, Torah from the Years of Fury 1939–1942*, trans. J. Hershy Worch (Northvale and Jerusalem: Jason Aronson, 2000), 286–87.

[79] Karen Armstrong, *A History of God* (New York: Random House, 1993), 381–82; Hans Küng, *Does God Exist? An Answer for Today*, trans. Edward Quinn (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1980).

[80] Jonas, "Matter, Mind, and Creation," 192. See Etty Hillesum, *An Interrupted Life: The Diary of Etty Hillesum, 1941–1943*, trans. Arnold J. Pomerans (New York: Metropolitan Books/Henry Holt and Company, 1996), 178.

[81] On petitionary prayer versus contemplative prayer in Hasidism, see Rivka Schatz-Uffenheimer, *Hasidism as Mysticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1993), 144–88.

[82] Rabbi Dov Baer, the Maggid of Mezhirech (circa 1710–1772), is considered the successor of the Ba'al Shem Tov (known as the Besht), the founder of Hasidism, and the teacher of most Hasidic masters in the century following the death of the Besht in 1760.

[83] *Maggid Devarav le-Ya'akov of the Maggid Dov Baer of Mezhirech* [Hebrew], ed. Rivkah Schatz-Uffenheimer (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1990), 25.

[84] See Ron Margolin, *The Human Temple* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 2005), 302–7.

[85] For example, Rabbi Menachem Nahum of Chernobyl (1730–1797), one of the leading students of the Maggid of Mezhirech, said: "This was God's chief intent in commanding both the Tabernacle and the Temple: to cause His presence to dwell in the individual Temple which is man"; see Menachem Nahum of Chernobyl, *Upright Practices: The Light of the Eyes* (New York: Paulist Press, 1982), 13. In the same way that the material Temple becomes the dwelling place of God, as indicated in the verse "And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst" (Exodus 25:8), so Rabbi Menachem Nahum explains three ways in which human beings of flesh and blood can become a Temple for the divine. First, by its very existence, the Torah allows human beings to prevail over their inclinations, that is, to control their instinctive drives rather than be controlled by them. Second, by cleaving to the divine vitality concealed within the letters of the Torah and contemplated through prayer and study, one becomes mindful of this vitality and adheres to it, allowing it to pervade the self and dwell therein. This is the path of contemplation and inwardness attained by absorption in the vitality of the letters through prayer and study. Third, the path of lowliness, or the mind's negation of a distinct self-worth and the conscious realization that everything is the self is sustained by the portion of Divinity that is within. See Margolin, *The Human Temple*, 127–38; 325–27.

[86] Etty Hillesum, *An Interrupted Life*, 205.

never drive You from my presence."[87] Because the image of God can so easily disappear, prayer itself becomes a way of preserving it in human beings. Etty Hillesum's entire life became a dialogue with God: "my life has become an uninterrupted dialogue with You, oh God, one great dialogue."[88] This may seem to reflect a traditional perception of God, but almost one year before she had written: "Truly, my life is one long hearkening unto my self and unto others, unto God. And if I say that I hearken, it is really God who hearkens inside me. The most essential and the deepest in my hearkening unto the most essential and deepest in the other. God to God."[89] Hillesum's God is the sublime element within a human being that corresponds to Jonas's understanding of the anthropic evidence of transcendence.

What, then, is the aim of prayer? If it is to ask God to supply our material needs, then God must be omnipotent; however, if the aim of prayer is to deepen the meaning of life by asking God to dwell in the world, a "weaker" God who is not omnipotent may be even more worthy of our prayers. Jonas is not alone in his efforts to make prayer possible for those who possess the awareness so characteristic of secular religiosity and some religious sources, that God is deaf and mute. Israeli author Michal Govrin expresses this poignantly in a trialogue held on October 14, 1998, with Jacques Derrida and David Shapiro reviewing her novel *The Name*, which is about a religious search by the daughter of Holocaust survivors:[90]

> Prayer itself has the power to establish the space of the address—to create, to open it. And in a way it does not only create an "I" who has the power to address, but also the addressee. Although it sounds heretical, it's a very central, traditional Jewish attitude that prayer does create the listening god in the moment of saying the name of "God" in their prayer. At that moment the language induces the listening of God. Yet this indispensable listening is never taken for granted. The listener can always close his ear and turn away.[91]

[87] Ibid., 178.
[88] Ibid., 332.
[89] Ibid., 204.
[90] Michal Govrin, *The Name*, trans. Barbara Harshav (New York: Riverhead Books, 1998).
[91] David Shapiro, Michal Govrin, and Jacques Derrida, *Body of Prayer* (New York: The Irwin S. Chanin School of Architecture of the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science & Art, 2001), 35.

Jacques Derrida agrees with Govrin and develops the idea further:

> When we pray we address someone who is present or not present, so that each time we address someone, we call someone.... "My Lord open my lips" (Psalms 51, 17). I pray the Lord that He allows me to pray. I don't pray the Lord for just asking this or that, but I pray for Him or Her, for the Unique One, to free my prayer, to allow me to pray. That is why it is a prayer and an order at the same time: be the one who allows me to pray. So, be the addressee of my prayer, and allow me to pray. It's praying after the prayer prier après la prière which is the prayer before the prayer, the prayer for the prayer.[92]

Derrida concludes the trialogue by saying, "The address does not depend on my prayer, but my prayer invents my relationship with this other."[93] In this statement Derrida reveals his lesser-known face as a philosopher of secular religiosity. The evidence for it comes from yet another statement from the same event: "If by praying I was just doing what is possible, what I can do, (every day I, many people do that, they stand, they put on the tallith and they pray; it's possible): this is not a prayer. The prayer should do what is impossible, and for this to take into account, or not to take into account to keep intact the contradiction."[94]

If Derrida supports Jonas's secular religiosity, the Catholic theologian John Haught criticizes it. He claimed that Jonas's theodicy is incomplete because it leaves out a sufficient basis for a theological hope in the redemption of humanity and the universe and wished to include "the idea of the promise of the natural world to Jonas's idea of the potential of the natural world for mind and inwardness."[95] In response to Haught's critique and in support of Jonas, Rabbi Lawrence Troster has suggested that eschatology could be added to Jonas's theodicy, which in turn would "link it to an authentically biblical/Jewish faith."[96] Here lies the difference between theology (as articulated by Haught and Troster) and Jonas's secular religiosity: although some religious ideas offer consolation, Jonas believed that they are unacceptable without a solid basis in reality and history. As a Jew, Jonas viewed the concept of

[92] Ibid., 61–63.
[93] Ibid., 69.
[94] Ibid., 67.
[95] John F. Haught, *God after Darwin: A Theology of Evolution* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000), 168–84, here 184.
[96] Lawrence Troster, "Hans Jonas and the Concept of God after the Holocaust," *Conservative Judaism* 5 (2003): 16–25, here 23.

the Chosen People after the Holocaust as the paradox of paradoxes. In "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," Jonas boldly asserted: "Nevertheless, just this and no other people, under which the fiction of race had been chosen for this wholesale annihilation—the most monstrous inversion of election into curse, which defied all possible endowment with meaning."[97] After two world wars and so many threats to the future of humanity, the belief in a Divine promise may appear naïve, at least from the Jewish point of view.[98] Messianic hopes do indeed play a part in traditional Judaism. However, Jonas does not advocate shutting one's eyes to the anti-providential and anti-messianic meanings of the Holocaust and the Second World War, nor does he view the victory over the Nazis and the founding of the State of Israel after the Holocaust as confirmation of contemporary messianism, like that of Zionist Orthodoxy. Once the Divine promise was revealed as ineffectual, the war against evil had to be carried out by individuals. Better to see the situation as it is and to take on the burden of responsibility for the future of the world without illusion.[99] Secular religiosity concurs with religion so long as it does not contradict reason and science, truth or reality, and so long as, unlike Orthodoxy, it does not lead to dissonance between faith and knowledge. There is room for faith from the perspective of secular religiosity, but this faith is an expression of un-knowing that presupposes a distinction between faith and knowledge, without which it becomes meaningless. As Derrida puts it, "Faith, the act of pure faith, implies precisely that I cannot, that I should not and could not be sure of the possibility. I should and could not be sure of existence, of the presence. Because it is impossible for me to know—because of the gap between faith and knowledge, because I cannot know and I cannot perceive the presence of the other as such—the act of faith is absolutely required."[100] Modern history has revealed the worst intentions

[97] Jonas, "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," 133.

[98] Jonas emphatically states: "To the Christian (of the stern variety) the world is anyway largely of the devil and always an object of suspicion—the human world in particular because of original sin. But to the Jew, who sees in 'this' world the locus of divine creation, justice, and redemption, God is eminently the Lord of history, and in this respect 'Auschwitz' calls, even for the believer, the whole traditional concept of God into question." Jonas, ibid., 133.

[99] See Jonas's critique of utopia and utopianism in idem, *The Imperative of Responsibility*, 157–204.

[100] Shapiro, Govrin, and Derrida, *Body of Prayer*, 75.

of the human mind and the bareness of God's promise to shield humanity from such intentions.

Derrida, Buber, and Jonas are all examples of secular religiosity. However, unlike Buber and Derrida, who refrained from public religious observance, during his long years in America, Jonas was a member of a Reform congregation in New Rochelle. Nonetheless, Jonas's secular religiosity is unique and irreducible to external aspects of his life, such as synagogue membership. Jonas kept abreast of new developments in Jewish studies, particularly in the study of Kabbalah, where his interest was not merely academic but also personal. Like Buber, Jonas sought religious sources from within the Jewish tradition and combined them with his *Weltanschauung* and the creation of a new myth. His belief in myth, sorely lacking from most forms of modern Judaism, albeit in keeping with non-Orthodox movements, sheds a new light on the complexity of his attitude toward religion. For Jonas, religion is existential, a speculative system that is a "projection" of an entire approach toward existence. As he put it: "the explicit theory, then, has indeed issued from an existential stance—I call this the primal 'objectivation' by which I mean something with transcendental validity. It furnishes the horizon for its evidential experiences and specifies them in advance. It inspires the search for them, fosters them and legitimates them."[101] This definition, which enabled Jonas to say that "without an antecedent dogmatics there would be no valid mysticism," reveals not only his scientific understanding of mysticism but also the complexity of his understanding of the religious phenomenon. It is based on speculations but these speculations are objectivations, and the experience is subjective but based on a real existential position. Although his attitude toward religion may appear somewhat ambivalent, for Jonas it expressed a strongly experienced reality. There is an inner coherence between his principles of secular religiosity and his scientific understanding of religious experience and myth.

Reason was held by the rationalism of the Enlightenment to be an almost omnipotent faculty that would lead humanity to a shining future. Psychoanalysis as a by-product of modern rationalism and the scientific approach uncovered the power of the "id," the non-conscious being, and demonstrated the limits of rationalism with a promise to overcome

[101] Hans Jonas, "Myth and Mysticism: A Study of Objectification and Interiorization of Religious Thought," in idem, *Philosophical Essays*, 291–304, here 303–4.

them by exposing the "id" to consciousness. The historical realities of the twentieth century and the continuing struggles of individuals against the irrational forces of personality despite their psychological awareness led modern thinkers like Jonas to adopt a skeptical attitude toward the exclusive power of rational thinking to protect the world from human destructiveness. Jonas reminds us all:

> It is moot whether, without restoring the category of the sacred, the category most thoroughly destroyed by the scientific enlightenment, we can have an ethics able to cope with the extreme powers which we possess today and constantly increase and are almost compelled to wield. Regarding those consequences that are imminent enough still to hit ourselves, fear can do the job—fear which is so often the best substitute for genuine virtue or wisdom. But this means fails us toward the more distant prospects, which here matter the most, especially as the beginnings seem mostly innocent in their smallness. Only awe of the sacred with its unqualified veto is independent of the computations of mundane fear and the solace of uncertainty about distant consequences.[102]

These forthright words lead us to conclude that Jonas saw no full alternative for the religious awe of the sacred most of us have lost. Although he built his ethics in *The Imperative of Responsibility* on a rational view of nature rather than a religious one,[103] he knew there was something missing. In his theological speculation he formulated a type of secular religiosity that may be understood as an attempt to renew our lost but indispensable sense of awe without contradicting rational, scientific thought. Jonas, like other existentialist thinkers and writers (for example, Dostoyevsky, particularly in *Crime and Punishment*), agonized over the loss of sacred awe and in response to this, formulated the ideas that pertain to what I have termed secular religiosity.

The search for the traces of a transcendent source of being was the foremost challenge of Jonas's secular religiosity. Its aim was to reinforce our standing vis-à-vis the dangers we pose to our own continued existence through a heightened awareness of the transcendental source behind subjectivity, thus awakening our reverence for nature, life, and humanity.

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[102] Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility*, 23.

[103] See above, n. 6, based on the end of the question in the previous note.

PART TWO

THE PHENOMENON OF LIFE AND THE THREAT OF EXTINCTION: THEORETICAL BIOLOGY, BIOETHICS, AND ENVIRONMENTAL PHILOSOPHY

CHAPTER ELEVEN

HANS JONAS AND ERNST MAYR: ON ORGANIC LIFE AND HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY[1]

Strachan Donnelley

In December 1996, the Hastings Center hosted a meeting of a "Humans and Nature" research project, "Revisiting Nature: The Legacies of Charles Darwin and Aldo Leopold." During a break, Ernst Mayr, then some ninety-three years young and widely acknowledged as the dean of evolutionary biology said, "You know, we ought to have a meeting on Hans Jonas. He was one of the few thinkers who took organic life and organisms seriously. He was wrong, but he was philosophically and morally serious."

These were memorable words for me. Hans Jonas had been my respected and cherished philosophic mentor at the Graduate Faculty of the New School for Social Research, and I was becoming increasingly interested in the biological and philosophic writings of Mayr. I felt the personal and professional tension, a pull toward both thinkers. Despite any feelings of divided loyalties, Mayr's suggestion provides a golden opportunity for bold and important exploration. In the "Revisiting Nature" project and now at the Center for Humans and Nature, we are trying to coherently yoke together long-term and intertwined responsibilities to human communities and natural ecosystems and landscapes. This challenge, long ago recognized by both Mayr and Jonas, is rapidly becoming perhaps *the* moral and civic issue of our times.

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[1] Earlier versions of this paper were published under the titles of "Philosophy, Evolutionary Biology, and Ethics: Ernst Mayr and Hans Jonas," *Graduate Faculty of Philosophy Journal* 23, no. 1 (2001): 147–63, and "Natural Responsibilities—Philosophy, Biology, and Ethics in Ernst Mayr and Hans Jonas," *Hastings Center Report* vol. 32, no. 4 (2002): 36–43.

First note the practical import of the issue. "Humans and nature" problems press upon us from all sides. We are all becoming—or should be becoming—more cognizant of global warming; ecologically unsustainable cities and agricultural practices; the overuse of antibiotics in our health care systems and on our factory farms (chicken, pigs, fish, and more); the global crash of ocean fisheries; a human population and use of natural resources that is literally squeezing out other forms of life (the so-called human extinction event); and the pollution and degradation of our air, soil, and water. (Fire seems to be doing OK.) On a less grand scale, consider a cancerous growth of resort (golfing) communities in Hilton Head Island and Beaufort County, South Carolina, that is not only running roughshod over traditional, including Gullah, communities, but is also so polluting coastal waters as to render local oysters, shrimp, and other seafood inedible. What will happen to traditional Lowcountry fishing cultures and communities? What will happen to the coastal ecosystems and the complex and interacting forms of life that they harbor?

I could turn our attention north and discuss the demise of wild salmon rivers in Canada's eastern provinces (for example, the St. Mary's River in Nova Scotia) thanks to the clear-cutting of the rivers' headwater forests, acid rain wafting in from the North American west (U.S. and Canada), crashing ocean fisheries, or whatever else, singly or in combination. But I need go no further. As my daughter Inanna would say, "Dad, wake up and smell the coffee." We have urgent human and nature problems on our hands.

However, these problems are not only practical, moral, and civic. They are also theoretical and conceptual. Whether we realize it or not, we are in a profound cultural crisis. We need to get our heads screwed on right if we are to act responsibly toward humans and nature in their intimate and complex interconnections. We must consider how best to approach moral and civic judgments concerning the future of humans and nature. Specifically, we need, I think, to explore the complex interactions and mutual influences of philosophy, evolutionary biology, ethics—conceptual enterprises all—and our primary interactions and encounters with humans and nature in everyday life. Ernst Mayr, the evolutionary biologist and philosopher of biology, and Hans Jonas, the ethicist and philosopher of organic life, provide the opportunity of comparing two approaches to the master problem, our practical responsibilities to the human and natural world, with the promise of new and important insights.

1. *Ernst Mayr's Darwinian Revolution*

Let us first begin with Ernst Mayr and the broad strokes of his account of the Darwinian revolution in biology, which he considers so profound and far-reaching that it moves well beyond scientific theory and constitutes a genuine shift in philosophic and moral outlook, a new fundamental worldview, whether or not most of us have made this shift or adequately fleshed out its implications.[2]

Mayr's claim is that Darwin's theory of the evolution of all life by common descent, behavioral and genetic variation, and natural selection challenges to the core Western cultural and intellectual traditions which trace their roots back to Plato, the pre-Socratics, and beyond, calling into question central and fundamental conceptual presuppositions.

According to Mayr's interpretation of Darwinian thought, evolution is an eminently natural process, marked fundamentally by historical dynamism, regional causal contexts, and unpredictable contingencies, as well as the particularity and uniqueness of biological entities. The first philosophic pillar of Western tradition to fall is *cosmic teleology*, nature conceived as the Grand Design of a Grand, Divine Designer.[3] Rather, nature in passing engenders its own forms of organic order—genomic, organismal, populational, communal, ecosystemic, bioregional, and biospheric. There is an ever-recurring evolutionary two-step: genetic variation (genetic mutation and sexual recombination) and natural selection or elimination (as well as sexual selection), which favors those who can survive to reproduce (by whatever means—adaptive advantage, luck, or others, singly or in combination).[4] The evolutionary two-step directly challenges central Judeo-Christian traditions and theologies in which creation of the world is intelligently designed and purposively directed.

Perhaps less conspicuously, modern Galilean-Cartesian-Newtonian science, with its reductive analyses and hegemony of material efficient causes—"billiard-balls-in-motion" *determinism* or *physicalism*—is similarly challenged.[5] According to Mayr, the biological realm is a much more complex, historically contingent, probabilistic, and stochastic

[2] Ernst Mayr, *One Long Argument: Charles Darwin and the Genesis of Modern Evolutionary Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 101ff.
[3] Ibid., 50.
[4] Ibid., 46, 68ff.
[5] Ibid., 40, 48.

affair than the early modern physical sciences and cultural worldviews would have it. In animate nature, there are always multiple causes at work on multiple spatial and temporal scales—a hierarchy of causes or influences only to be recognized by a system's thinking that transcends mere linear strands of efficient causation. Moreover, and equally as telling, Darwinian biologists confront a form of matter unrecognized by old-time physicalist scientists—DNA, with its programmatic (informational) instructions for organisms' phenotypical development and life, both somatic (bodily) and behavioral.[6] Mayr claims that this curious, historically engendered form of matter breaks the bounds of classical materialist and casually deterministic science. There are not only the (traditional) "proximate" causes of organic phenomena, physiological or other, that are amenable to reductive analysis and explanation in terms of physical and chemical reactions; there are also "ultimate" causes, here understood as the historical evolution (coming into being) of the particular genetic programs (genomes) themselves, the ongoing interplay of genetic and phenotypic variation and environmental pressures (natural selection).[7] The form-giving or directing potentialities of historically engendered DNA are an enigma or "black box" to classical materialist science, which in principle cannot capture, let alone rigorously predict, the complex and concrete interactions of organisms and their environments.

Mayr points to a third philosophic pillar of the Western tradition that is radically undermined: *essentialist* or *typological thinking*. Its demise is perhaps the most crucial or telling of all.[8] The time honored species-type "dog," "cat," "rose," "human being"—with all individuals considered essentially the same and plagued only by accidental variations—are creatures of outmoded biological, philosophical, and theological conceptions and worldviews. Enter *populational thinking* at the core of evolutionary biology's explanations and explorations.[9] With perhaps rare exceptions (cloning, identical twins), all organisms are genetically and phenotypically unique, different from all others. Species or taxa of organisms are now commonly understood as potentially or actually interbreeding populations of these organic individuals. The taxa or populations themselves are considered to be concrete historical entities or particulars, with

[6] Ibid., 108ff.; 132ff.
[7] Ibid., 52.
[8] Ibid., 40.
[9] Ibid., 41ff.

their own reality, as constituted by their passing (mortal) and interacting individual organisms. Moreover, the variation among organisms, their particular and unique individuality, is not inconsequential or merely adventitious. It is the very warp and woof of animate life on earth, a central feature of the historical, evolutionary drama. Without requisite genetic and phenotypical variation provided by individual organisms, there would be nothing for natural selection to select. Life would not and could not adaptively evolve within populational species or engender new reproductively isolated populations (the new biological definition of a species). What was peripheral to traditional essentialist world views is at the core of Mayr's new Darwinian worldview—a crucial shift in worldview perspective.[10]

The biological conception of an individual as a "populational being" connotes a more or less thorough sea change in systematic, philosophic thinking. An essentialist conception of an individual—conceived either as a species-type or a being with its own unique and unchanging essence or character—easily lends itself to atomistic thinking, that is, the individual conceived as essentially unrelated to the world, alone by itself, in need of no other. (This is Descartes' definition of a substance.) Not so with a populational individual, an organism, which is fundamentally and necessarily tied to the historical world and a life carried out among others. There is a particular world history behind the individual's very uniqueness of being, its own life in the world, in particular its genome (its historically engendered programmatic DNA), which must interact with its specific present environment, including other individual organisms, if its particular phenotypical body and behavior are to emerge. Moreover, for fundamental metabolic reasons—energy capture, bodily regeneration, and other—an individual organism, for example, an animal, must wade into and interact with the world, and if it is to play an ongoing, if modest, role in evolutionary and ecological history, that is, reproduce and pass on genetic information, it cannot remain isolated, alone by itself (unless it belongs to an asexual population). In short, populational individuals are not only biologically unique and particular, but are fundamentally related to the historical, temporal, ongoing world. In sum, with the conception of a "populational individual," we must fundamentally reconceive our notions of human nature, as well

[10] Ibid., 26ff.

as other organic beings. We must begin thinking in new ways. We must undergo conceptual "gestalt shifts."

Mayr's own philosophic worldview and world commitments here come to the fore. Mayr is enamored with the diversity of life on individual, population, species, ecosystemic, and bioregional levels: with life's past history, present, and future. In biological explanation, philosophic interpretation, and moral reflection, he characteristically keeps a focused eye on particular, unique, individual organisms, always enmeshed within interacting populations and wider communities of life. He is fascinated by the plural and diverse ways that "tinkering" nature purposelessly pulls off its evolutionary twists and turns. He celebrates life's particularities, contingencies, messiness, and openness to unplanned novelty—speciation through geographically isolated founder populations, exploitation of new ecological niches, and more.

In all this, Mayr remains a naturalist, materialist, empiricist, and pragmatist. He will accept only naturalist (and historical culturalist) explanations, no matter how conjectural or open-ended. He holds philosophic and theological rationalists—all *a priori* reasoners—at bay. They are at bottom essentialists, believers in eternal and unchanging forms of reality, ill-begotten children of Plato. Yet he equally staves off old-time crude reductionists, physicalists, and determinists (whose reality "at bottom" is nothing but the billiard-balls-in-motion) and insists on the central and ongoing importance of scientific and philosophic speculation (hypothesis-making), ever held open to empirical refutation. (There are no certain guarantees of truth.) Finally, he insists on the importance of conceptual clarification in exploring the complex, fundamental facts of worldly life. For example, he draws a sharp distinction between cosmic teleology and "teleonomy," the informational programs of DNA that play a crucial role in organic development and behavior.[11] The goal directedness of these genetic programs can be either closed (hard-wired) or open-ended, that is, amenable to modification or learning through environmental, including cultural, interactions. He thereby blocks and repudiates cosmic teleology or goal-directedness, while leaving open the possibility, if not the empirical reality, of naturally circumscribed free will or choice (and thus responsibility) of organic individuals, human

[11] Ibid., 67.

beings with their historical communities and cultural information in particular.[12]

This is not to say that Mayr's evolutionary perspectives escape all philosophic problems and solve all riddles. How to think together natural (material) reality and human freedom and responsibility ongoingly plagues philosophers, historically prompting philosophic speculative flights that Mayr, the philosophic naturalist, dismisses. Here he may remain in a genuine philosophic *aporia* (unresolvable situation). As a naturalist and avowed materialist, he has the interesting, newly discovered matter on his hands: programmatic or "informational" DNA. Whether or not this form of material existence and the natural world of which it is a part can support a philosophical interpretation of genuine, if circumscribed, human freedom and responsibility and escape determinism as traditionally conceived is a question that we should leave open. But at least Mayr has jogged our minds and significantly refocused the terms of the argument and the framework of thinking from which we can retackle the issue. This is the philosophic bequest of Mayr's interpretation of the Darwinian revolution. With the philosophic demise of cosmic teleology, classical determinism, and essentialism, replaced by populational, evolutionary, and ecological thinking, we are offered a new opportunity for reapproaching the perennial question of human freedom and responsibility, a question directly germane to our concrete worldly obligations to humans and nature.

Before turning to Jonas, I want to emphasize certain crucial tenets and implications of Mayr's philosophic world view. First is his claim of the autonomy of the biological sciences and of evolutionary biology, ecology, and ethology in particular.[13] Mayr's nature is a deeply historical, dynamic, Heraclitian realm that includes, as we have seen, the central feature or reality of DNA, genes, and genomes, a material unknown to Newtonian physicalism. This newly conceived nature involves complex developmentally- and behaviorally-related teleonomic (goal-directed) programs that emerge from and within evolutionary, ecological history, which traces itself back some 3.8 billion years. In short, history and historical processes fundamentally and crucially matter to the reality and sciences of organic life. These particular historical

[12] Ibid., 154ff.

[13] Ernst Mayr, *This is Biology: The Science of the Living World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), xiii, 30.

dimensions and processes "go beyond" the physical and chemical sciences, without violating their time-tested general (atemporal) laws or discoveries. Biology, as a science unto itself, in this sense "transcends" physics and chemistry.

Secondly, the presence of informational matter or genetic programs forces us to reconceive our fundamental notions of causation. Multileveled causation and the simultaneous work of proximate (physical/chemical) and ultimate (informational/programmatic) causes means that the billiard-balls-in-motion model of causation—blindly running physical antecedents determining physical consequents, with no brooking interferences—is out.[14] "Orchestral causation" is in.[15] Mayr would have us imagine music performed by an orchestra, say Verdi's *Requiem*. Who or what is the cause of the orchestral music? The individual instruments severally, or the interactions of the composer's programmed score, the players, the conductor, the chorus and soloists, the sounds, the acoustics of the concert hall, and much more, including the (differing) "musical ears" of the audience. Mayr would claim that it is the latter, and no single and singly sufficient causes are to be concretely or intelligibly identified. The resultant orchestral music is unique, its individual and complex concrete character in principle unpredictable. It is to be (newly) conceived as a novel *emergence* (or *emergent*) from the innumerable interactions involved. Emergent properties issuing from the systemic interactions of worldly interactors, and the hierarchies of objects and emerging entities that such interactions engender (for example, genomes, cells, organs, organisms, communities, and ecosystems) is a key concept for Mayr and biology in general. The concept of emergence, as used by biologists, arguably signals the break from the old hegemony of physics and chemistry in science.

The centrality of emergence as a biological concept once again strikingly raises the philosophic question of the nature of an individual organism, including a human individual or self—a favorite and central topic of Hans Jonas. What is an individual or a self? How does it come into being? Seemingly, the individual organism, the phenotype that we encounter in everyday experience, is also in some fundamental sense "an emergent or emergence"—ongoingly until it dies. There are interactions of inherited genomes (genetic information), the cellular

[14] Ibid., 66ff.
[15] Ibid., 151–74.

and bodily somatic environment, and the wider ecosystemic, worldly environment (along with the past history of the individual self, if any) from which emerge the present human individual or some other living organism. (We have come a long way from Descartes's substantial, aworldly, and unchanging soul or mind.)

This present individual becomes one of the interactors in the generation of the worldly future, including the ongoing individual self. But, again, we are enjoined to keep in mind the centrality of "emergence" as related to the individual self. Organic, including human, individuality and worldly interaction go hand in hand. (Spinoza, in his critique of Descartes's notion of substance, had said as much.) Individuality conjoined with worldly interaction emphatically constitutes a gestalt shift in thinking, a conceptual reconfiguration, a moving beyond traditional modes of thought. Again, note the possibility and empirical reality of ever more complex emerging individuals with open-ended (versus closed) teleonomic programs, up to and including our human selves. Note further that these fundamental themes of interaction and emergence *in principle* rule out for Mayr any strict or reductive genetic or environmental "billiard-balls-in-motion" determinism. Conceptual room is left for the recognition of the worldly importance of contingency and chance, as well as reflective, intentional, and responsible action.

Mayr's world is a grand, historical, natural symphony engendered by an evolutionary, ecological orchestra with an incredible and definitely charactered diversity of living forms, capacities, individual species, and more. Prominent features of this ever-changing and probabilistic affair are captured via genetic variation and selection in genomic information, which is a conserving or conservative side of evolving nature, "channeling" (albeit imperfectly and non-deterministically) the development of the worldly biotic future. This is the biologically informed world view of Ernst Mayr. What is the world according to Hans Jonas?

2. *Hans Jonas's Philosophic Revolution*

Hans Jonas provides his own, non-Darwinian critique of early modern Western philosophic and scientific tradition. In *The Phenomenon of Life, Philosophical Essays, The Imperative of Responsibility*, and elsewhere, Jonas critically fastens upon Descartes's original, rigid ontological *dualism* of mind and matter, which exist in casual independence and splendid isolation from one another. Cartesian dualism leaves no room for an

adequate philosophic interpretation of organic individuals, identity, and bodily liveliness, human or other.[16] Real, psychophysical individuals who must make their precarious way in the world are written out of the philosophic picture. Beyond Descartes, Jonas levels equally searing and telling critiques on the historical derivatives of dualism, *idealism* (the claim that all reality is essentially experience or mental functioning) and *materialism* (the counter-claim that all reality is essentially matter or physical functionings). Dismissing idealism as a self-congratulatory, non-serious story of the presence of mind and psychic phenomena in the natural world, Jonas focuses his critical attention on classical Newtonian materialism or physicalism and its correlative epiphenomenalist thesis of mind and subjectivity. (Note the parallels to Mayr.)

I will not rehearse Jonas's full critique, but only point out a few highlights.[17] Physicalism, as a scientific conviction, is premised on strict causal physical (material) determinism, consequents solely determined by antecedents, with no room for contingency, chance, or interventions from the psychic or mental realm. Only thus, it is claimed, are the grand constancy laws of natural matter and energy upheld. The epiphenomenalist theory of mind claims that all subjectivity is the reflection and idle sport of matter or the physical realm—a sport with no energy expenditure, no purpose, and no efficacy in the real (physical) realm of things. Jonas relishes the absurdity of this philosophic nightmare. A non-efficacious subject is no subjective agent or "actor" at all. Moreover, we have no legitimate reason to take seriously the arguments of an epiphenomenalist materialist, since he or she can claim no rational mind or human subjectivity in the normal sense. Under their own rules, the materialists cannot get mind and thus rational argument into their physicalist nature. Why should we listen to such "self-canceling" thinkers? Finally, nature is philosophically scandalized. Already rendered valueless by Descartes's original bifurcation of mind and (purposeless) matter, nature here creates the illusion of purpose in us, if not also other organisms, for no intelligible reason. This is absurd.

Jonas claims that physical sciences need not have led themselves into this embarrassing philosophic cul-de-sac in the first place. The physicalist wants to gain a positive causal knowledge of nature. Such

[16] Hans Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life: Toward a Philosophical Biology* (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1966), 56, 58ff.

[17] Hans Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), 205ff.

knowledge and the upholding of the constancy laws require a thesis or working hypothesis of strict determinism. So far so good, as an intelligent methodological ploy. But then the physicalists take their fateful misstep and confuse methodology with metaphysics, claiming that all things really are physically determined and that knowledge of physically determined causes and effects is the only kind of knowledge that we humans can have. This imperceptible slip plunges them into a philosophic quagmire. Physicalists commit what Alfred North Whitehead has termed the "fallacy of misplaced concreteness," mistaking abstractions and partial truths or aspects of things for concrete reality and the whole truth. Jonas admonishes physicalists to stick to science and leave philosophers to pursue disciplined speculations or interpretations of what might be the wider truth of things.

Though Jonas does not take much stock in it himself, he contrives an argument to show how subjectivity and mental efficacy can exist side by side with methodological, versus metaphysical, physicalism.[18] The argument of mind as both autonomous and effective trigger mechanism vis-à-vis the material world need not detain us. Whatever, Jonas contends that he has slain the dragon of metaphysical, physicalist determinism and that he can legitimately readdress with an open mind, unclouded by inherited theoretical blinders, the phenomena of organic life and the efficacy of subjectivity, purpose, and individual agency, whether human or other, consciously intentional or no. (Once again we open up the possibility of a theoretical gestalt shift, an important reorganization in thinking.)

We should note in passing that, unlike Mayr, Jonas does not pit Darwinian biology against the physical sciences, but ranges biology, including genetics, within contemporary deterministic, positivist science.[19] To a certain degree, this may be legitimate with respect to molecular biology (proximate causes), but here might be one deep and crucial root of Mayr's quarrel with Jonas and why he considers Jonas wrong. For Mayr, Jonas does not plumb the depths of the Darwinian revolution, especially the philosophic implications of historical genomes and "ultimate causation." Indeed, as we shall see, Jonas's phenomenological and speculative interpretations of organic life make little serious use

[18] Ibid., 216ff.

[19] Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 38ff.

of genetics or informational matter, that which is so central to Mayr's Darwinian account.

Jonas returns to everyday human experience and credits the self-evidence of subjectivity, individual agency, and effective purpose that we find in ourselves. As against the reductionist methodology of the physical sciences, Jonas employs a philosophic "regressivist" method. He accepts Darwin and the evolutionary story, which places us in lines of common descent from all sorts of life forms, including the great apes. Rather than blanch, Jonas warmly embraces this great worldly fact. If we, directly or indirectly, are related to all forms of earthly life, and if we find subjectivity, individual agency, and effective purpose within ourselves, then we can legitimately expect to find them in organic, biological others, in other species of organisms, no matter how attenuated. This fundamental conviction or premise underlies and justifies Jonas's "regressive" method of starting with human experience and working "backwards" or "down" into the full realm of organic being. The method underpins his philosophic, phenomenological, and speculative interpretation of organic life.[20]

I do not wish to treat Jonas's philosophy of organism in extensive detail, since I have discussed it elsewhere.[21] Starting with the basic phenomenon of metabolism, Jonas interprets organic life and individual organisms in terms, concepts, and categories that transcend Cartesian dualism, idealism, and physicalist materialism. For Jonas, organisms' metabolic mode of existence speaks for a freedom from the world as within a wider dependence upon the natural, material world. Organisms enjoy an ontological status that he terms *needful freedom*. An organism and its identity are constituted by a *living form* existing through and beyond its passing material constituents. (This is the aboriginal instance and form of "needful freedom.") An organism's mode of existence requires the being of an active agent, a self-feeling subject, purposively concerned with itself and its very being. The living individual form, the organic self or individual, embodies an active "no to non-being" or the deadness and valuelessness of inorganic nature. According to Jonas, organic life

[20] Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 23ff.; Strachan Donnelley, "Hans Jonas, the Philosophy of Nature, and the Ethics of Responsibility," *Social Research* 56 (1989): 635–57, here, 640.

[21] Strachan Donnelley, "Bioethical Troubles: Animal Individuals and Human Organisms," in "The Legacy of Hans Jonas," *Hastings Center Report*, 25, no. 7 (1995): 21–30, here 22ff.

is an ontological revolution in the history of matter, a radical change in matter's mode of being. Life involves an aboriginal introduction of value (purposive being) into the world, the advent of the ontological and cosmological status of needful freedom, which establishes itself with metabolic existence as such. Our modes of philosophic thinking must follow (register) this shift or revolution in reality's being.

Jonas traces the various dimensions of needful freedom from unicellular organisms through floral existence to animal being, including human cultural existence with its many dimensions from the economic and social, to the political, scientific, and technological, to the aesthetic, ethical, and spiritual. Through evolutionary history, ever more complex forms and capacities have emerged or come into being, each level involving new needful freedoms, a new independence and dependence on the world, new freedoms and necessities. There arise capacities of bodily movement or motility, emotion, sensitivity (including sense perception), practical thinking, and theoretical speculation—each a capacity or constellation of capacities that, once introduced into worldly being, must be used to pursue such newly emergent and capacitated existence. The living enmattered form of any metabolic organism and the human embodied self at its human heights and depths exhibit this same ontological, existential structure of needful freedom (circumscribed freedom in meeting the necessities or opportunities given with organic, worldly existence). Organisms on all levels, their necessarily precarious lives, their value achievements and failures—these mortal, finite, and vulnerable ones—are thus given their philosophic due (a penetrating interpretation). With respect to value, meaning, and significance, animate nature is philosophically rehabilitated and human beings naturalized—a crucial, "twin" move of ontological reinterpretation. We once again can philosophically recognize the humans and nature that we encounter in everyday life.

I do not want to go further into the details, but to explore Jonas's categories of analysis and his relation to Darwinian biology. As noted, Jonas emphatically accepts Darwinism and uses it for his own philosophic purposes. For Jonas, Darwinism blocks any metaphysical resort to Cartesian dualism or classical idealism, which thus marks Jonas's break from Kant, Hegel, and others. He is philosophically an organicist and naturalist, though (significantly) not a scientific organicist. Again, he makes rather sparing use of Darwinian biology, especially the role of genetic information in evolution and organic existence. Characteristically, Darwin is in the background, assigned to footnotes, rarely the

focus of central philosophic attention. Does this make an important philosophic, substantive difference?

Compared to Mayr, Jonas is relatively uninterested, philosophically and ethically, with nature's concrete history: the grand evolutionary and ecological story, Mayr's immemorial and still ongoing natural symphony. Rather, he is more attentive to the existential drama, inner life, and worldly adventures (including human moral responsibilities) of typical individual organisms, whether involved in social communities or not. Needful freedoms—and needful responsibilities—are the dominant themes of his philosophic explorations.

Here might be both a singular strength and perhaps a lingering weakness of Jonas's philosophy, if not his ethics. Its strength is in giving an internalist, phenomenological account of organic, including humanly organic, life: what it is and feels like to be an organism as experienced and conceived from the inside. This ontological and existentialist analysis complements Mayr's scientifically biological, "objective," more externalist account of the emergence of life's forms, capacities, individuals, and communities.

On the other hand, by relatively ignoring nature's evolutionary and information-engendering (genomic) history, Jonas may miss or overlook the full sweep, grandeur, and value-laden nuances of the natural and historical drama: that earthly nature's constituents, biotic and abiotic, have coevolved; that life's forms, capacities, and individuals arise in communities (populational and ecosystemic) dynamically, interactively, and relative to one another—biotic variation, diversity, and selection constantly at work. This largely amoral earthly history utterly fascinates and delights the philosophic biologist Ernst Mayr. It does not so capture the attention and imagination of the organicist philosopher Hans Jonas. As such, Jonas may relatively undervalue the significance for ethics of the communal, cooperative, symbiotic, as well as competitive, aspects of pre-human, and human, evolutionary and ecosystemic life.

More than critical questions of philosophic adequacy seem to be at work here. Rival worldviews are at stake. This is crucial. Worldviews are grounded in part in personal temperaments, interests, and histories. Jonas, the philosopher, is decidedly more the moral existentialist than Mayr. He has the more searching and wary ethical and spiritual eye, seeking out the morally irresponsible, reprehensible, and outrageous, as well as the laudable and noble. This ethical passion no doubt goes beyond philosophic and theological training to his personal life before, during, and after Hitler's Germany and World War II. Mayr, born a

Christian, "out of conscience" renounced his native Germany (he, in any case, was away from Europe doing biological field research), but in all probability was not so starkly thrown back on his own personal, including bodily, resources as the émigré Jonas, who promised to himself never to return to Germany except with a victorious, liberating army. (As historical fact, Jonas first turned his interests to the philosophy of life or organism while in the trenches of World War II, interests from the beginning laden with deeply moral concerns.)[22]

In short, though Jonas had a keen, connoisseur's appreciation of such philosophers as Heraclitus, Aristotle, and Spinoza, he did not share their, and Mayr's, serene cosmological, naturalists' exhilaration over the natural (if not human) world. He had humanly historical scores to settle and pressing worldly responsibilities to face and champion. (This is not to deny Jonas's high spirits, even impishness, which he certainly had.)

3. *Ethical Responsibility*

Nowhere can the differences and contrasts in worldviews be better seen than in Mayr's and Jonas's accounts of morality and contemporary ethical responsibilities.

Interestingly, both consider themselves as enlightened, post-Darwinian anthropocentrists, with responsibilities to humankind foremost, intrinsically conjoined with responsibilities to nature both for its own sake and our intricate implication in and dependence on a resilient, well-functioning, nature. However, the two arrive at this moral Rome by decidedly different ethical roads.

Mayr traces the roots of our moral life back to evolutionary processes that include animal social groups and wider communities; group and kin selection (so-called "inclusive fitness"); the animal behavior and "reciprocal altruism" studied by ethologists; and, of course, evolved genetic programs and their interactions with somatic and worldly environments.[23] These genetic programs, Mayr recurrently insists, are often open-ended. We human ones, thanks to our time-honed genetic backing, can learn from experience, enter into and creatively evolve

[22] Hans Jonas, *Philosophical Essays: From Ancient Creed to Technological Man* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1974), xiff.

[23] Mayr, *This is Biology*, 250ff.

human cultures, and decide things for ourselves, freely and responsibly, as within worldly (including genetic) constraints and opportunities. In Mayr, we find no genetic, environmental, or cultural determinism, the bane of the cruder forms of behaviorism and sociobiology. (Remember Jonas's epiphenomenalists.) The future is open, undecided, in principle unpredictable, and we have become increasingly significant actors, often for the worse, on the worldly scene.

Characteristically, Mayr's ethical interests and reflections are centrally informed by his understanding of evolutionary biology and ecology. For example, if we are to truly live up to culturally honored democratic ideals and strive for equal opportunity for all, Mayr insists that we must devise plural modes of education for our citizens, young and old. We do not all have the same capacities or learn in the same way. There is much human biodiversity amidst human commonalties. Mayr's moral pluralism is undergirded by, and coherent with, his biologist's populational thinking, his recognition of individual, "biodiverse" differences, genetic and phenotypic.

Further, Mayr is centrally exercised over our biologically ill-informed emphases on individual interests and freedoms at the expense of community and societal (systemic) needs. The latter must be seriously and adequately addressed if we are humanly to flourish in the future. Finally, and not surprisingly, he joins Aldo Leopold and other biological conservationists and naturalists in the call to responsibility for nature's future well being, for protecting ongoing evolutionary, ecological, as well as humanly cultural and community, processes.

Jonas likewise calls for and champions our worldly responsibilities for the human and natural future. This is the heart and soul of *The Imperative of Responsibility*. He similarly traces the full reaches of human morality and responsibility back to natural, organic origins—specifically to the human parent-child relation, to the natural feeling and unchosen responsibility for the utterly needy and vulnerable, but inherently valuable infant, with all his or her human promise to come.[24] However, Jonas does not trace the genesis of moral capacities back further into immemorial natural time, à la Mayr. Rather he takes a characteristic metaphysical and existentialist turn.[25] The intrinsic or fundamental value of all animate life and organic beings originates in the aboriginal ontological revolution, the purposive "no to non-being," the active

[24] Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility*, 130ff.
[25] Ibid., 46ff., 79ff.

individual assertion of the worldly self, the precarious staving off of death, ultimately futile for the individual, if not for each species or all animate life. The more complexly active and capacitated the "no to not-being," the weightier or higher the moral stakes. When life's capacities include moral responsibility itself, as with humankind, we come upon an absolute moral threshold and an ultimate categorical imperative, ontological as well as moral: humankind, and the nature so necessary to humankind and a morally responsible life, "ought to be." Over this moral imperative, we have no freedom to choose, save to be utterly irresponsible and reprehensible. Moral responsibility, in potentiality and actuality, harbored in human beings and being human, is for Jonas the ultimate good in itself.

Mayr, in the main, would agree, practically if not philosophically. Though Jonas in *The Imperative of Responsibility* explicitly and critically supercedes Kant's "here and now" categorical imperatives ("treat every rational agent as an end in itself," etc.),[26] Jonas's moral arguments nevertheless retain an unmistakable Kantian ring, a sense of transcendent absoluteness. "Humanity and nature ought to be." "Never put humankind at risk." What are we to make of this Kantian legacy or hangover?

Has Jonas fully left traditional essentialism behind: eternal forms or types, moral or other? Has he adequately superceded, or put in its right place, Newtonian physicalism and determinism? With his "Nature Purposive," has he fully abandoned cosmic teleology? (Jonas speculatively finds an aboriginal purposive striving [non-conscious and subjectless] to be behind the advent of organisms and ever more-complex organisms or individual subjects, strivings embedded in the natural universe, if not in the physicalist's nature.) Indeed, did Jonas want to join Mayr's naturalist, Darwinian revolution and fully abandon cosmic teleology; the blind determinism of dead, valueless, purposeless inorganic nature; and essentialism, with its promise of a final, unchangeable, incorruptible good? Do not Plato and Western religious traditions haunt the background or backstage of Jonas's philosophy, despite his call for philosophic reason, in moral and metaphysical matters, to go it alone without supernatural, rational, or divine support or underpinnings? These are all legitimate critical questions. Moreover, Jonas might not have intended to use philosophic strategies to elaborate a full allegiance to a naturalist's or philosophic evolutionary biological point of view.

[26] Ibid., 11.

Rather, Jonas did seriously mean his Kantian, absolutist ring, however adjusted to the realities he deemed disclosed by evolutionary biology and which he accepted and endorsed. Mayr might retort that, willfully or not, Jonas missed the full import for practical ethical responsibility of the centrality of emergent organic properties, "orchestral causation," and especially the implications of genomes (genetic information) in natural and humanly cultural processes.

In the end, Mayr might well be right. Jonas may have chosen not, or failed, to exploit the full philosophic fruits of the still unfolding Darwinian revolution. (Indeed, there is the intriguing philosophic suggestion that metabolic existence, needful freedom, and "genomic existence" came on the scene together and are perhaps radically one or the same, emphatically so when we come to animal existence.) Whatever, to be honest, we all are more or less in the same boat when it comes to comprehending adequately the phenomenon of emergence, systems thinking, and genetic contributions to the everyday world, in its heights and depths, human and other. We are still largely ignoramus, peering through a glass darkly, a riddle and mystery to ourselves.

Whether or not Jonas is overly biased toward the Western tradition and has not fully earned modern naturalist stripes is certainly a genuine and important question in the quest for an ever more adequate philosophic interpretation of the animate world. But it should not blind us to another significant, but different issue: the relation of conceptual disciplines (here philosophy, evolutionary biology, and ethics) to everyday human experience, as well as the importance of having both Jonas and Mayr in our philosophic and ethical arsenal when it comes to understanding and meeting our ethical responsibilities to humans and nature.

4. *Organic Life, Worldly Interaction, Ethical Responsibility*

Both Mayr and Jonas have moved us well beyond the old philosophic cosmology of Descartes, Newton, and their heirs. The new philosophic cosmologies of Mayr and Jonas, meant explicitly to interpret or further the understanding of organic life, are both centrally "interactionist" in character. We saw the theme of interaction in the philosophic and scientific stress on the essential dynamic relatedness of individual organisms and populations of organisms, humans included, to the historical, temporally deep world.

I want immediately to hop on this worldly "interactionist" insight and turn it briefly upon Mayr, Jonas, and our question of the relation of disciplined thought to everyday experience, including deeply felt "oughts" of ethical responsibility. In considering any one thinker, there is a mutual interaction between the individual's philosophic worldview, scientific understandings, ethical convictions, and personal interactions with the world, human and natural. With varying strength, these various dimensions of experience mutually inform one another without being reducible to one another. (Each dimension seems to have its own specific roots in the complex wellspring of the rich capacities, interests, and talents of humanly organic life.) In particular, when it comes to deeply felt, compelling ethical demands, our primary interactions with the world have the final, if not also the first, word. Our past experiences, including our philosophic, scientific, and ethical training and reflections no doubt pour into our present selves, out of which all our personal worldly future must proceed. (Barring traumatic injury, we can never leave our historical selves behind.) Yet, certain rationalist philosophers notwithstanding, it is in the primary encounters and interactions with the world that we first engender and consequently respond to ethical obligations, no matter how "informed" we are by prior conceptual, intellectual, and cultural adventures. The experience of ethical oughts or obligations, while nurtured and prepared by natural and cultural evolution, is an aboriginal existential, organismal response to the world, characterized by a "moral" emotional hue (the *feeling* of obligation). We have similar aboriginal existential and organismal responses—aesthetic, spiritual, and other. Here are the emotion-laden, value dimensions of our primary encounters with the world—encounters (often) further reflected and consequently acted upon. Here is the worldly setting of our human freedom and responsibility.

First note that this interactionist perspective directly challenges the nagging charge of moral and philosophic naturalists committing the "naturalistic fallacy" of logically deriving "ethical oughts" from "what is" (the facts or reality of the world). The naturalistic fallacy is a creature of the old worldview of humans and nature with its dominance of a single philosophic or scientific rationality and a single system of tightly consistent thought. Consider the "interactionist" alternative interpretation. Are my philosophic, scientific, and ethical reflections influenced or informed by my experiences of "what is," my ongoing primary experiences or interactions with the world? Most certainly. Are my ethical obligations *logically or rationally derived* from "what is" (worldly reality) or

from what I take to be worldly reality? No. The mutual interactions of philosophy, science, ethics, and primary worldly experience do not seem to be rationally or logically connected in this sense. The process of mutual informing or influencing is not one of logical deduction. New naturalist or organicist worldviews do not bow to the hegemony of deductive mathematical or logical reasoning—in any case, a bad model for philosophy, according to Whitehead. (Note how tight logical reasoning [mind] mirrors strict causal determinism [body] in Cartesian-inspired world views. Spinoza's *Ethics* is the supreme, unsurpassed example, with its own profound insights, power, and elegance, if not final truth, notwithstanding Spinoza's claim for the latter.) Wanting our ethical life to be deeply informed by what we (as well as science and philosophy) take to be worldly reality, its vulnerabilities to harm and its opportunities for realizing multiple goods, is not to commit the rational blunder of the naturalistic fallacy. It is an attempt to be humanly intelligent, realistically coherent, and deeply responsible to what is and can be, that is, the world and its future.

This squaring of accounts with the philosophic tradition takes us immediately back to Mayr and Jonas and their philosophic and ethical worldviews. Their final philosophic visions may be in tension with one another, and we may consider that one is more scientifically (biologically) informed than the other. But this does not mean that one or the other speculative philosophic and ethical worldview is less relevant or adequate to our primary encounters with the world. They may fasten upon and articulate different features of primary and interactive worldly experience, which need not be incompatible with one another.

The inexhaustible richness or complexity of the world as experienced by us humans is not to be captured in any one philosophic, scientific, or ethical worldview. (Most of us have given up this old, traditional rationalist dream.) This feature of theoretical finitude suggests that a plurality of significant (more or less adequate) worldviews is a boon, rather then a curse, in helping further disclose the fullness of our ethical responsibilities to the world, to nature and ourselves.

This indeed is the case with Mayr and Jonas. Mayr is more the philosopher and ethical champion of natural and human *becoming*—of natural and cultural processes, systems, and forms in all their glorious, worldly diversity. Mayr would have us ensure that this grand human and natural show flourishes indefinitely.

Jonas is more the philosopher and ethical champion of organic and human *being*. He is less stunned by the innumerable material forms and processes of life than by the very fact of life itself and especially organic life's capacity for moral responsibility, evidenced in human beings. That in a vast universe characterized largely by inorganic, dead matter, there has emerged animate and moral being as a revolt against death and valuelessness—these are the realities above all that Jonas enjoins us to protect into the indefinite future.

Note specifically how the interactions of philosophy, biology, ethics, and primary experience play out differently in the case of Jonas and Mayr. Jonas, the veteran of twentieth-century wars and the witness of their atrocities, in *The Imperative of Responsibility* and elsewhere stares modern life and our rapidly developing technologies in the face and calls for new philosophic and ethical reflection and vision: the centrality of ethical responsibility to the long-term human and natural future, backed by corresponding philosophic and metaphysical reflection. He incorporates what evolutionary biology he deems necessary into his philosophy and ethics. On the other hand, Mayr, the biological naturalist, incorporates those philosophic conceptions which serve his biological explorations and critical reflections. Correspondingly, his worldly moral life and commitments are significantly (though not exclusively) informed by his biological knowledge and primary passion for nature's (and human's) historical, worldly becoming. Whatever the overlap, the accents of the organicist philosopher Jonas and the philosophic biologist Mayr are markedly different, thanks to their primary worldly experiences, interests, and passions.

Now remember South Carolina's Beaufort County golfing resorts and coastal ecosystems; Eastern Canada's salmon rivers; Alaska's wilderness harboring oil for SUVs; global warming; the crash of ocean fisheries; the blighting of traditional, including farming, communities and cultures; the degradation of soil, water, and air; the injustices perpetrated on human and natural communities alike; our biotechnologically "monoculturing" (reducing the genetic diversity) of our natural world, if not ourselves (human cloning). These events or realities engender in us natural, worldly responsibilities, responsibilities pressed upon us by the historical course of things that need no logical deduction for their recognition, despite our seeming inability to face their compelling call. It is good that we have both Ernst Mayr and Hans Jonas, with their singular and differing visions, to help us explore, articulate, and act upon these responsibilities. Sometimes it will be Mayr's evolutionary naturalist's vision that will better help us to see our duties and moral failures. Sometimes it will be Jonas's ethics of natural and moral *being*

that may better move us into doing what we know, however imperfectly, is right. For example, are we really going to let coevolved species of life, perhaps including ourselves, go into the night of extinction (nothingness, valuelessness) due to our own action or inactions? Could or should we live with such shame and guilt? To meet our natural responsibilities—our responsibilities to the nature of things, "humans and nature" worldly realities—it is good fortune that we have both Mayr and Jonas, among other philosophic and ethical explorers. We need all the help we can get, from whatever quarter.

5. *Addendum: The Matter of Matter*

Despite finally advocating pluralism with respect to the moral worldviews of Jonas and Mayr, we should not miss the opportunity of briefly letting the two go head to head philosophically on an important and intriguing matter already touched upon: the matter of matter, the material and organically material realm. How do or should we speculatively interpret the advent, as well as the historical evolution, of life, including our own?

The matter has again become topical, given the recent outbreak of heated battles between the Intelligent Designers, Creationists, and Darwinian Naturalists. We may wish that all sides would quit dogmatic entrenchment, allow intelligent design to be taught in philosophy or theology classes where most of us feel it belongs, leaving science to its autonomous, evolving, methodologically constrained self. However, there is no such hope. Both sides are arguing over reality, the same reality. As such they have landed themselves, wittingly or no, on fundamental philosophic turf, where there are no final dogmatic answers, only the hope of penetrating, often illuminating interpretations of the real, here organic life, matter, and order.

Mayr is an avowed naturalist and atheist, claiming that biology and the organic realm transcend the physical sciences and inorganic nature, thanks to the "ultimate causation" of genetic programs at work within wider orchestral causation, which also includes physical and even at time cultural causes. But from whence come material genomes (nucleic acids) harboring genetic, teleonomic (goal directed) information? (This pointedly is the matter of organic matter.) Philosophically Mayr is constrained to remain agnostic on the point or to claim that genetic

information has a material, natural origin. It must emerge from and within the material realm of inorganic nature.

This actually, I think, is Mayr's speculative answer. He warmly endorses Niels Bohr's assertion that emergence is a reality of the inorganic, as well as the organic, realm. (No one would have predicted the "aqueous quality" of water from the interactive combination of hydrogen and oxygen atoms.) Emergent properties (and individuals or particulars) arise "unpredictably" from the interactions in a material system that is a hierarchical level below the emergent reality. Emergences (here life or genetic information) do not depend on some inherent quality of matter (the old vitalist premise), but rather on the particular organization of the interactive material constituents at that penultimate systemic level. Of course, the emergent may orchestrally interact with other emergents at its level (and lower levels) to produce unpredictable novel emergent phenomena at the next higher systemic level, and so on.

So, I think, Mayr would speculatively explain the ultimate physical-chemical basis of life "non-reductively." The emergent potentials of interactive material constituents are key. This may be as far as he can philosophically go. Whatever, here matter is a decidedly more interesting affair than it was for old Newtonian physicalists. Matter "blindly" harbors the potentiality of self-generative, self-sustaining, self-reproducing life and, further, all the values, human and other, that historically and orchestrally have come into being, including human cultural communities and individuals. Some matter indeed—well worth further philosophic pondering.

But how goes the matter of matter with Hans Jonas? Jonas has a decidedly different story to tell. As we have seen, he considers organic life and matter to be an unprecedented ontological revolution in the history of matter. The origin of life, Jonas claims, is beyond our philosophic ken, our capacity to understand. But once there, it is there in all its radical starkness and difference from dead, inorganic nature. From purposiveness, subjects' agency, self-concern, and values, leading up to and including human moral values and responsibility, there is an unbridgeable ontological gap to the inorganic world, something akin to Descartes's ontological dualism of mind and matter, save Jonas recognizes that life must use matter in order to be, act, and thrive, as with metabolism and reproduction. Life always is necessarily enmattered or embodied. Nevertheless, life stands over against death and the dead: the

valueless and vacuous existence of the inorganically material universe, the mechanistic, physicalist world of Galileo, Descartes, and Newton. (Here we may hear an echo of, and debt to Heidegger, Jonas's early mentor, a note with ultimately religious or "Gnostic" significance.)

Whatever, once life comes on the ontological scene in its most rudimentary unicellular forms, Jonas can coherently join Darwin and Mayr. The evolution, diversification, and elaboration of "purposive being" and "needful freedom" are an internally natural, historical, sometimes cultural, earthly affair, with no brooking interferences from outside, that is, divine interventions, intelligently designed or no.

This is all Jonas will, and in all honestly, can, philosophically say. Philosophy has its limits (speculative interpretation of phenomena or experiential evidence) beyond which it must remain silent and be agnostic on ultimate issues.

However, this is not the end of the story. Jonas can speculate religiously or mythologically. He can creatively engender scenarios that he would only *like* to be true. (He can make no claim of truth about myths.) And Jonas briefly enters upon mythmaking. He envisions a God who holds nothing back of himself, but gives himself over entirely to the worldly realm of historical becoming so that life, value, and moral responsibility might become and be in the midst of a dead, valueless universe. Is this the aboriginal introduction of purposiveness and needful freedom into the universe? (As noted, he does speculatively entertain the notion of pre-organic, subjectless instances of purposiveness in the world.) No doubt, Jonas would like to believe this in his heart of hearts. However, he will not claim this as reasoned philosophy. He was a significant original philosopher, not a dogmatist, one who over ultimate matters knew that he did not know.

Actually, this was not the end of Jonas's mythmaking. At a conference in Jerusalem in the early 1990s, not long before his death, I asked Jonas if God's giving himself over to the world "without remainder"—a more radical act than the Christian God's giving of his son for the sake of mankind—constitutes a divine suicide, the annihilation of a divine, supernatural reality altogether. His eyes quickened. He smiled with a certain friendly peevishness. "I told you that I have not fully thought this out. No, I think something was left over." Some agentless eternal Being and Goodness, not to be touched by evil and the ravages of historical becoming? Is this a late descendant of Plato's ultimate Form of the Good? Jonas spoke no further, but he had said in his writings that our modern preoccupation with history and becoming may not be the last

word. He was characteristically non-dogmatic. However, given his extra-philosophic speculations on divinity, the Kantian, categorical character of the moral philosophy of *The Imperative of Responsibility* makes perfect sense. Ultimately, notwithstanding his original philosophic attention to the nature, dynamics, and challenges of organic, worldly life, Jonas was a philosopher of Being, not historical, natural becoming.

Jonas is a shining moral and philosophic example for those embroiled in the intelligent design-Darwinian evolution debate. On the one hand, he shows how one can be a Darwinian and still be a theist. (One probably does have to more or less significantly reconceive traditional, "essentialist" theology.) On the other hand, one can be a committed Darwinian naturalist or atheist and still be deeply and genuinely religious or spiritual. Life and the material world so necessary for its being, as interpreted by Jonas, Mayr and others, command ultimate respect, allegiance, and final moral commitment. These are ultimate, fundamental spiritual matters, readily felt as such, despite our ongoing personal and communal failures to protect earthly life.

If all this is to be true, what really is all the intelligent design-natural evolution fuss about? A sound and fury signifying nothing? Stubborn old cultural habits that refuse to go away? Or something less ultimate and noble: matters of power and control; economic, political, social, and cultural advantage or survival? There is nothing particularly spiritual, religious, or philosophical about this. For all our sakes, let us end the eclipse of philosophy in publicly and morally important matters. Let us be truly and genuinely human, as interpreted by theists or atheists, who, thanks to life and being alive, share more common ground than they are willing to admit.

CHAPTER TWELVE

NATURAL-LAW JUDAISM?: THE GENESIS OF BIOETHICS IN HANS JONAS, LEO STRAUSS, AND LEON KASS[1]

Lawrence Vogel

The shadow of Martin Heidegger looms large over his most original Jewish students. Each offers a philosophical diagnosis of their mentor's moral failings. Emmanuel Levinas follows Martin Buber's criticism that Heidegger forgets "the Thou" or "*Other*" in his account of authenticity. Hannah Arendt and Leo Strauss accuse Heidegger's "politics of Being" of distorting a more human *politics*. And Hans Jonas develops Karl Löwith's charge that Heidegger fails to do justice to *nature* as what gives rise to life and the *body* as the medium of our existence.

The University of Chicago's Leon Kass is the most important bioethicist writing out of the work of Hans Jonas today and, as immediate past chair of the President's Council on Bioethics, the most politically powerful. Though Jonas has a Jewish theology that supplements his ontological vision of nature, his ethic does not depend on revelation. For Kass, on the other hand, a satisfactory account of human dignity must go *beyond* what "unaided reason" can tell us about human nature. He offers an interpretation of sexuality and reproduction based on Genesis to "correct" Jonas's philosophy of nature. And given what Genesis teaches him about living "worthily in God's image," Kass adopts a far more broad-sweeping conservatism than the stance Jonas officially held.

Kass's appropriation of Jonas is deeply influenced by the work of another Jewish thinker of University of Chicago fame, Leo Strauss. One

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[1] I wish to thank audiences at the University of Chicago, Trinity College (Hartford, CT), Dartmouth College, and Arizona State University for helpful replies to earlier versions of this paper. It also appeared in the *Hastings Center Report* 36, no. 3 (2006): 32–44 and in *Humanity before God: Jewish, Christian and Islamic Faces of Contemporary Ethics*, ed. William Schweiker, Michael Johnson, and Kevin Jung (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2006), 209–37.

gets a glimmer of this in Kass's critique of "the post-moral ambience" of modern liberal democracies and his remark that because conservative moral views rooted in "natural hierarchy" will never be popular with more than a few, "we should put our trust neither in nature nor in philosophy but in our religious traditions."[2] For his part, Jonas did not want religious argument to be used in the service of public, ethical debates. In any case it is not clear that Jewish sources should be read as justifying the sort of "hierarchy" that Kass apparently thinks they do when he defends "patriarchy" as "the primary innovation of the new Israelite way."[3]

That Kass's work has heretofore been of less interest to Jewish commentators than to the Bush administration should not conceal the fact that, by blending American-style neoconservatism with Judaism, Leon Kass has become the most influential public Jewish intellectual on matters bioethical. His understanding of Judaism, however, supports a position quite close to what William Galston has called the "Catholic-evangelical entente."[4] Halakhic Judaism, according to Galston, tends to be much more accommodating than the "Catholic-evangelical entente" on issues like stem-cell research, new reproductive technologies, abortion, and euthanasia. If this is correct, then Kass is really out of the Jewish mainstream, and we must ask whether he is a reliable transmitter of Jewish values on these matters. Or, to put it bluntly, is he driven by a natural-law perspective through which he filters his readings of Torah so that they end up supporting a position closer to the Pope's or even Charles Colson's than the rabbis'?

But before turning to Kass we need to consider the thinker Kass calls "my first real teacher in philosophical biology," Hans Jonas.[5]

[2] Leon R. Kass, "The Troubled Dream of Nature as a Moral Guide," *Hastings Center Report* 26, no. 6 (1996): 22–24, here 24.
[3] Leon R. Kass, *The Beginning of Wisdom: Reading Genesis* (New York: Free Press, 2003), 249.
[4] William A. Galston, "What's at Stake in Biotech?," *The Public Interest* 149 (Fall 2002): 103–108, here 106.
[5] Leon R. Kass, "Appreciating *The Phenomenon of Life*," *Hastings Center Report* 25, Special Issue: The Legacy of Hans Jonas (1995): 3–12, here 4.

1. *Jonas on Contemporary Ethics from a Jewish Perspective*

In 1968, Hans Jonas saw the biotechnological wave on the horizon and posed a challenge as relevant today as it was then: "If we are Jews—and a corresponding question Christians and Muslims must ask themselves—what counsel can we take" from our tradition in the face of "the pressing dilemma of our time"?[6] The dilemma stems from the explosion of our technological powers coupled with the demotion of our metaphysical rank within nature. If the Copernican revolution left "the nature of things, reduced to the aimlessness of their atoms and causes, with no dignity of its own," revolutions in evolutionary biology, psychoanalysis, and the social sciences left us with no image of our own higher nature, nothing analogous to the biblical idea that we are created in the image of God.[7] If we *can* manufacture new and improved versions of ourselves, then *why not*—for example—screen fetuses to weed out the "unhealthy" or even unwanted, genetically engineer healthier babies, clone desirable individuals, forestall the aging process so that people can have much more of a good thing, harvest the organs of brain-dead patients to save potentially flourishing people, and let doctors gently kill when their patients have ceased to lead meaningful lives?

Confronting the Pandora's box of biotechnology, Jonas raises a question still pertinent today:

> Can we afford the happy-go-lucky contingency of subjective ends and preferences when (to put it in Jewish language) the whole future of the divine creation and the very survival of the image of God have come to be placed in our fickle hands?... We need wisdom when we believe in it least.[8]

But, Jonas contends, science does not "refute" the symbolic meanings of four key Biblical propositions: that God 1) created heaven and earth, 2) saw His creation was good, 3) created humanity in His own image, and 4) makes known to humanity what is good because His word is "written in our hearts." And these meanings, he states, *must*

[6] Hans Jonas, "Contemporary Problems in Ethics from a Jewish Perspective," in idem, *Philosophical Essays: From Ancient Creed to Technological Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 168–82, here 178.
[7] Ibid., 173.
[8] Ibid., 176, 178.

be preserved "if we are still to be Jews."[9] Jonas sets out not to *prove* the truth of these propositions, but only to *articulate* the wisdom that can be gleaned from "the Jewish stance" on the relation between power and responsibility.

On the *negative* side, Torah teaches us "modesty in estimating our own cleverness in relation to our forebears."[10] And caution rooted in modesty "requires that we go slow in discarding old taboos, on brushing aside in our projects the sacrosanctity of certain domains hitherto surrounded by a sense of mystery, awe and shame."[11] On the *positive* side, the idea of creation sanctions an attitude of reverence for "inviolable integrities."

Torah, according to Jonas, teaches us to be responsible caretakers of the integrity of the life-world. "While Biblical piety saw nature's dependence on God's creative and sustaining will, we now also know its vulnerability to the interferences of our developed powers." Respect for the phenomenon of life on earth demands that we cry out "an unconditional 'no' to the depletion of the six-day's plenitude—and also, we might add, to its perversion by man-made genetic monstrosities."[12]

Torah teaches us not only reverence for nature but also for our human nature, for we are "made in God's image." The main meaning of *imago Dei*, according to Jonas, is our ability to distinguish between good and evil and our responsibility for promoting the good, symbolized by the commandment, "Be ye holy, for I am holy, the Lord your God." Jonas concludes that respect for the mystery of human freedom should make us seek the improvement of character through education, not genetic manipulation, and prefer persuasion under conditions of freedom to psychological manipulation in the hands of behavioral engineers. Finally, Jonas contends that biblical wisdom teaches us to balance a love of life with an acceptance of mortality, for "the birth of new life is life's answer to mortality," and if we abolished death, we would have to abolish the birth of new life, too. The upshot of the Psalmist's words—"Teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom" (Psalm 90:10–12)—is that medicine should not be

[9] Ibid., 177.
[10] Ibid., 178.
[11] Ibid., 179.
[12] Ibid., 180.

transformed into the Promethean effort to eliminate imperfection or to prolong life at all costs.[13]

So Hans Jonas speaks as a Jew about how veneration for humanity under God might help us resist the tide of "modern reason" which holds that there is no human essence, for revelation gives us an "image of man" sufficient to put ethical limits on what we have the right to do to ourselves in the name of bettering our God-given nature. In his role as a philosopher, however, Jonas insists that his imperative of responsibility can be "ontologically" grounded without appealing to theistic premises, for "an image of man" is rooted in "the integrity of nature," even if nature is *not* God's creation. This grounding depends on a description of "the phenomenon of life" at odds with the assumptions of modern materialism.

2. *Jonas's Ontological Grounding of an Imperative of Responsibility*

Jonas uses Heidegger's own *existential* categories to subvert the modern credo that human being is the origin of all value. He provides "an existential interpretation of the biological facts" that lets us see, in the spirit of Aristotle's psychology and against Cartesian dualism, how all organisms, not only humans, have "concern for their own being." Value and disvalue are not human creations but are essential to life itself. Every living thing has a share in life's "needful freedom" and "harbors within itself an inner horizon of transcendence," for each organism must reach out to its environment in order to stay alive.[14]

The extension of *psyche* or self-concern to all organisms enables Jonas to venture two *ontological* conjectures that cannot be proven but are consistent with the biological facts, existentially interpreted: 1) that matter's feat of organizing itself for life attests to latent organic tendencies in the depths of Being; and 2) that the emergence of the human mind does not mark a great divide within nature, but elaborates what is prefigured throughout the life-world. And these two points make room

[13] For other references in Jonas's work to the image of God motif, see Hans Jonas, *Mortality and Morality: A Search for the Good after Auschwitz*, ed. Lawrence Vogel (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 75, 178.
[14] For his most complete account of "an existential interpretation of biological facts," see Hans Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life: Toward a Philosophical Biology* (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 2001).

for a third speculation with dramatic *ethical* consequences: 3) insofar as we see ourselves, with our capacity for reflecting Being in knowledge, as "a 'coming to itself' of original substance," we should understand ourselves as being called by nature, our own source, to be her guardian. By extending the category of "existence" to all organisms, Jonas makes possible a radical conversion of modern thought: "a principle of ethics which is ultimately grounded neither in the authority of the self nor the needs of the community, but in an objective assignment by the nature of things."[15]

But the primary focus of our responsibility ought to be humanity itself:

> Since in [man] the principle of purposiveness has reached its highest and most dangerous peak through the freedom to set himself ends and the power to carry them out, he himself becomes, in the name of that principle, the first object of his obligation, which we expressed in our "first imperative": not to ruin, as he well can do, what nature has achieved in him by the way of his using it.[16]

Unlike Plato's eternal Form of the Good, the good-in-itself of living nature is at the mercy of our actions. Our primary duty is to protect the future of humanity because we are "executor[s] of a trust which only [w]e can see, but did not create."[17] Jonas's precautionary imperative enabled him to level early criticisms of environmental degradation, human cloning, germline genetic engineering, crude forms of behavior control, and the immortality project on the grounds that these risk closing "the horizon of possibilities which in the case of man is given with the existence of the species as such and—as we must hope from the promise of the *imago Dei*—will always offer a new chance to the human essence."[18]

In effect, Jonas claims to have found an ontological analogue to the theological idea that we are created in the image of God. Once the prejudice of modern reason—materialism—has been challenged by Jonas's "existential interpretation of the biological facts," he can defend three biblical propositions *without* recourse to the premise at the heart of the biblical tradition: that God created heaven and earth. In each case,

[15] Ibid., 283.
[16] Hans Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 129.
[17] Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 283.
[18] Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility*, 140.

we must be able to translate a theological proposition into a naturalistic one. First, "God saw that His creation was good" gets reinterpreted in Jonas's metaphysics as the good-in-itself of living nature whose very being imposes an "ought-to-be" whenever a responsible agent is there to appreciate it. Second, "God created man in His own image" gets recast as the notion that "the Idea of Humanity" is an event of cosmic importance because our power to reflect Being in knowledge and to put our imprint on nature is constrained by our responsibility for the good-in-itself: the transcendent measure of our cognitive and technical powers. Finally, "God makes known to man what is good because His word is written in our hearts" gets translated into the idea that the objective imperative of responsibility is answered by our subjective capacity to feel responsible for the totality, continuity, and futurity of the fragile object that commands our respect: namely, the existence and essence of humanity on planet Earth.[19]

Though nature *may* be God's creation, there is no *need* to ground ontology in theology, for nature is purposive even if there is no "purposer." The goodness of life must speak for itself. If it falls silent, Jonas contends, theology cannot rescue it from the nihilist's protest that "the whole toilsome and terrible drama isn't worth the trouble."[20]

The outcome of Jonas's philosophy is a defense of the biblical idea that "the human essence" lies in "our ability to distinguish between good and evil, which is said to be the main meaning of the phrase, 'imago Dei.'"[21] But the means of this defense—an ontological grounding of the imperative of responsibility—is true to the Greek idea that the human mind shares in the divine because reason is able to grasp the good-in-itself. It remains unclear, therefore, whether Jonas is a philosopher of nature whose project is informed by Judaism—or rather a philosopher who happens to be Jewish. The question is particularly pressing in the face of Leo Strauss's claim that the Hebrew people had no concept of nature as a measure available to human reason: a standard in light of

[19] For Jonas on "the fundamental biblical propositions" negated by contemporary ethical theory, see section II in his "Contemporary Problems of Ethics in a Jewish Perspective."
[20] For Jonas's argument that the response to "nihilism" must be ontological, not theological, see Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility*, 47–48.
[21] Hans Jonas, "Tool, Image, and Grave: On What is beyond the Animal in Man," in idem, *Mortality and Morality*, 75–86, here 75.

which we might evaluate the variety of human conventions.[22] Mustn't Jonas's project be seen as an essentially "Athenian" move—*contrary* to the temper of "Jerusalem"? To be sure, Jonas develops a theology, most forcefully presented in his essay, "The Concept of God after Auschwitz: A Jewish Voice."[23] And he does speak to a religious audience as a Jew about how the idea that we are created "in God's image" might help us address quandaries in bioethics. Nonetheless, in his role as philosopher, Jonas insists that ontology is likely to provide a more universal footing for ethics than theology, and that appeals to revelation too easily place irrational dogmas on higher ground.

3. *Kass's "Correction" of Jonas: Why Accounting for Human Sexuality and Reproduction Requires Returning to Genesis*

In his essay, "Appreciating *The Phenomenon of Life*," Leon Kass calls Hans Jonas "my first real teacher in philosophical biology," applauding Jonas's attempt "to think nonreductively about living nature."[24] Jonas seeks to bypass "the quarrel between the ancients and moderns" by showing how the modern view that "mind even on its highest reaches remains part of the organic" need *not* preclude the ancient credo that "the organic even in its lowest forms prefigures mind." By Kass's lights, Jonas "succeeds" in demonstrating 1) that and how every organism is a psychophysical unity, "the living concretion of embodied awareness or of feeling-and-striving body"; 2) that the form of an organism is causally primary; 3) that life-forms are hierarchically ordered with the human animal possessing "unquestionable [ontological] superiority" over merely nutritive and sensitive souls; and 4) that teleological notions are indispensable to an explanation of life that is true to both the functioning of organisms and the upward trajectory of evolution.[25]

Yet Kass finds "something missing from this otherwise truthful account of rising individuality" which tells us how "animals, and especially the higher animals, are more pronounced selves who live in a more

[22] Leo Strauss, "Progress or Return," in *The Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism*, ed. Thomas L. Pangle (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 227–70, here 253.
[23] Jonas, "The Concept of God after Auschwitz: A Jewish Voice," in idem, *Mortality and Morality*, 131–43.
[24] Kass, "Appreciating *The Phenomenon of Life*," 3–4.
[25] Ibid., 4–5.

pronounced world." The missing ingredient is "the specially focused kind of desire . . . rooted in sexual difference."[26] Though Jonas brilliantly describes how metabolism is a defining power of life, he admits, when Kass challenges him, to giving short shrift to sexuality and reproduction. And he concurs with Kass's diagnosis: that Jonas remains in the grip of his mentor, Heidegger, who viewed existence as a struggle between the solitary, mortal individual and an inhospitable world.

Kass speculates on where "a corrected teaching" on the phenomenon of life might lead. For hunger, the world comprises prey, predators, and a vast sea of indifference. But for eros the world contains "some very special, related but complementary beings: members of the same kind but opposite sex towards whom one reaches out with special interest and intensity." In sex, Kass says, life is not self-centered individuality but self-sacrifice: "unbeknownst to themselves animals desire their own replacement, voting with their genitalia for their replacement." Still, the full truth of sexuality is not so self-denying. In reproduction, life offers to life a kind of transcendence, for organisms have the chance to leave behind another like themselves—"participating in the eternal in the only way they can." To conceive of life apart from its reproductive whence and whither, as Jonas following Heidegger tends to do, is "to homogenize the outer world and exaggerate its loneliness."[27]

Kass concedes that "the wisdom of finitude and the redemptive possibility of now-precarious perpetuation comprise the cornerstone of Jonas's teaching on responsibility."[28] Jonas, after all, calls the parent/child relationship "the archetype of all responsibility," for a parent is responsible for the "totality, continuity and futurity" of the child, on the basis not of a revocable contract, but the unconditional, one-sided claim of the vulnerable object. In this respect parental responsibility is a precursor to our obligation to protect the future of humanity as such, for this, too, calls for total, continuous, and future-oriented caretaking. But whereas the desire to protect one's own is "implanted in us by nature," Jonas's imperative requires a level of veneration for "the Idea of humanity" that does not come naturally, for it calls on us to control

[26] Ibid., 11.
[27] Ibid., 12.
[28] Ibid.

our present-centered inclinations for the sake of a distant future that will not serve our own happiness.[29]

Kass alleges, however, that Jonas's wisdom regarding how "children provide life's (partial) answer to mortality" derives not from Heidegger or even Aristotle, but from his Jewish heritage, "a more loving and just tradition" whose anthropology is anchored in Genesis.[30] Though Kass credits Jonas with "[knowing] all this in his bones," he criticizes his mentor for not accounting for the meaning of reproduction. Jonas calls the parent/child relationship "the archetype of all responsibility" to be sure, but he treats the relationship in a *gender-neutral* way. Kass's Genesis, on the other hand, understands the ultimate meaning of "generative love" in terms of the *heterosexual* difference between male and female. The telos of this difference is realized, Kass tells us, in the institutions of *marriage* and *patriarchy* that, because they are "somewhat against the grain of nature," must be authorized by *revelation*.[31]

It is worth considering *The Beginning of Wisdom*, Kass's 700-page interpretation of Genesis, as an elaboration of his "correction" of Jonas: a midrash on what his teacher failed to acknowledge, but supposedly "knew in his bones" all along. My purpose is not to retrace the twists and turns of Kass's long argument, but to elicit its basic structure so that we can see how his reading of Genesis serves as both a reply to Jonas and a lever for Kass's critique of modernity.

4. *Kass on Genesis: The Way of Right Replaces the Way of Nature*

Kass holds that Genesis offers a philosophical anthropology: an account of "the timeless psychic and social principles... of human life... in all their ambiguity."[32] This anthropology provides the basis for an ethics and politics, for it shows how "it is possible to find, institute and preserve a way of life, responsive both to the promise and the peril of the human creature, that accords with man's true standing in the world and that serves to perfect his god-like possibilities."[33] In one respect,

[29] For a comparison of the responsibilities of parents and statesmen, see Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility*, chapter 4, section III.
[30] Kass, "Appreciating *The Phenomenon of Life*," 12.
[31] Kass, *The Beginning of Wisdom*, 250.
[32] Ibid., 10.
[33] Ibid., 11.

the Bible anticipates modern natural science, for it "recognizes the silence of the heavens and the earth regarding the human good and, therefore, emphasizes the incompetence of human reason, thinking only about nature, to find a decent and righteous way to live." But, unlike science, the Bible compensates for the deficiencies of nature and reason with revelation: "a teaching for human life that, though *accessible* to human reason, is apparently not *available* to unaided human reason as it ponders the natural world."[34] Because biblical stories dramatize and codify the meaning of human eros in a way unavailable to unaided reason, Kass concludes, what it means to live "worthily in God's image" cannot be gleaned, Jonas notwithstanding, from an ontological vision of nature alone.[35]

In the creation stories Kass identifies "two crucial strands of our emerging humanity": the linguistic (or rational) and the sexual (or social). The linguistic/rational strand culminates in the Noahide code, whereby "man uses his freedom and reason to promulgate moral and legal rules and to pass moral and legal judgments, first among which is the judgment that manslaughter is to be punished in kind because it violates the dignity of such a moral being." The Noahide code founds civil society on rudimentary but explicit notions of law and justice rooted in the idea that all human beings are created equally in God's image. "God's image is tied to blood," the high depends on the low, for "human elevation is achieved only through a law that reminds the god-like man to honor and defend his precarious, animal-like mortal existence."[36] Kass claims that belief in the *covenant* is as important to the new civil society as belief in the code of law, for "God's covenant... overcomes by agreement nature's indifference, not to say hostility, to human aspiration," and so supports our hope for a future that will redeem the exercise of our "higher" possibilities.[37]

The sexual/social strand of human nature, however, is crucial to *perpetuating* this new civil order across generations. Generative love, rooted in the difference between male and female, shows how we are *unlike* God, but in ways that bear on the idea that we are created in God's *image*. The Bible's genius, according to Kass, is to make the rational and sexual strands of human nature inextricable. For Genesis

[34] Ibid., 6.
[35] Ibid., 294.
[36] Ibid., 186.
[37] Ibid., 188.

(and against Heidegger), man became man when he became conscious of his own sexuality, not mortality.

> Human eros... takes wings from the recognition that there are higher possibilities for man than finally unfulfilling acts of bodily union, among which is the establishment of long-lived familial societies, grounded in the awareness that sex means children, human children need long-term rearing for sociality, morality and love, and children are life's (partial) answer to mortality.[38]

The story of the Garden of Eden shows that "gender-neutral humanity is an abstraction or, at most, a condition of childhood."[39] Furthermore, "the primordial story of man and woman" Kass contends, "hints that complementarity—the *heterosexual* difference—and not just doubleness... may point the way to human flourishing altogether."[40] God's later legislative efforts in Leviticus, Kass states, will codify what became clear at Sodom: that acts of incest and sodomy embody unjust principles of "love of like, aversion to unlike" and "sexual selfishness."[41] Sodomy in particular shows what happens, Kass avers, when "city dwellers, devoted both to political unity and immediate self-satisfaction, and indifferent to their vulnerability and need for replacement, take nonprocreative sex to its logical and sterile conclusion."[42]

Division of labor, inequality, and rule and authority enter the sexual picture in Genesis 3 with the coming of children: the woman's desire, God predicted, would be to her man, and he would rule over her; he, in turn, would toil and trouble to provide for her and her children (3:16–19).[43] Kass interprets Genesis from chapter 12 on as a story about what it takes to educate young men to become worthy husbands and fathers—against the wayward tendency of their male nature, for "most men, left to their own devices, do not readily leap to this task," pursuing instead ways of life devoted to wealth and pleasure, power and domination, or even heroic quests for personal honor and glory.

"Law, custom and instruction are everywhere needed to shape and transform the natural attractions between man and woman into the

[38] Kass, "Appreciating *The Phenomenon of Life*," 12.
[39] Kass, *The Beginning of Wisdom*, 98.
[40] Ibid., 121.
[41] Ibid., 294–95.
[42] Ibid., 329–30.
[43] Ibid., 270.

social and moral relations of husband and wife."[44] Though "the Noahide code is silent on this subject," Kass states, God Himself supports all three elements of the marital bond: 1) respect for woman's chastity and marital sexual fidelity, which anticipates 2) the gift of children within marriage, which makes necessary 3) the right ordering of the household, with the husband endorsing his wife's devotion to the well-being of their children.[45] This by no means diminishes the role of women, Kass tells us, for "it takes the right women to attach their husbands to the high-minded and reverent rearing of the next generation."[46]

Though Kass describes a "true wife" as "an equal partner," he states that "the primary—not the last but the first—innovation of the Israelite new way" is "patriarchy."[47] He admits that "patriarchy" has become "a dirty word" today because it is thought to refer to "the hegemonic and arbitrary rule of men over women and children, justified simply because they are men."[48] But he insists that:

> patriarchy properly understood turns out to be the cure for patriarchy properly condemned. The biblical sort of patriarchy is meant to provide a remedy for arbitrary and unjust male dominance and self-aggrandizement, for the mistreatment of women, and for the neglect of children.... Patriarchy properly understood... depends on marriage rightly understood, [and both are] essential element[s] in promoting holiness and justice. [But] they are hardly the natural ways of humankind. They have to be learned—to begin with, somewhat against the grain.[49]

"Abraham must learn that founding and leading a great nation depends on women, whose generative power holds the key to the future."[50] Like most men, Abraham needs more instruction than women in tending to the family because women as childbearers are naturally closer to the claims of "generative love." And Abraham must learn that proper founding and rule, like proper fatherhood, requires a reverent orientation to "the fatherhood of God." Abraham, Kass claims, is "the model father of his family and his people because he loves God more than his own."[51] All fathers, states Kass, "sacrifice" their sons to some "god"

[44] Ibid., 268.
[45] Ibid., 292.
[46] Ibid., 266.
[47] Ibid., 291.
[48] Ibid., 249.
[49] Ibid., 250.
[50] Ibid., 266.
[51] Ibid., 348.

by what they respect and teach in their homes. We rear our children not for ourselves but to do without us, to take our place, to aspire to righteous and holy ways. The "true father" is even willing to part with his son altogether—witness Isaac—recognizing him rather as a gift and blessing from God. This anticipates the "true founder's" acceptance of the fact that his own innocent sons must suffer for the sake of the righteous community, that one's own life is not worth living if there is nothing more sacred for which one will sacrifice oneself.[52]

The psychological structure of what Kass calls "proper patriarchy" is clear enough. Future generations provide life's answer to mortality. Women must lure men away from their lustful and worldly exploits and get them to acknowledge their dependence on women's reproductive powers, but out of pious regard for the transcendent imperative "to be fruitful and multiply." Parents, however, owe their children not only life but a good life, and the "true father," more independent as he is than mother from the natural connection to "one's own," is better able and duty-bound to transform "family values" into a civic piety oriented by devotion to what is higher than politics altogether. Although women as wives and mothers initiate and ground the transformation from animal lust to human eros, men must complete the transformation as fathers and leaders whose patriarchal authority is oriented by "fear of the Lord."

Kass claims, in effect, that important aspects of what it means to "live worthily in God's image" are not captured by Jonas's philosophical biology, oblivious as it is to the place of sexuality in the meaning of life. Jonas—with his ontological analog to the idea of humanity in the image of God—fails to appreciate the depth of the tension between Athens and Jerusalem, reason and revelation, nature and right. His gender-neutral interpretation of the *imago Dei* motif overemphasizes equality at the expense of heterosexual difference and "natural hierarchy." "God's instruction consists in replacing the way of nature with the way of right," Kass tells us, for "natural sexual impulses will not by themselves establish the proper institutional forms."[53] Revelation allows for a "completion" of Jonas's "more natural science," but one with serious implications for Kass's whole view of bioethics, which

[52] Ibid., 350.
[53] Ibid., 294.

now goes well beyond (in its specificity concerning our "proper" limits) Jonas's quite general "imperative of responsibility."

5. *Kass on Genesis and the Crisis of Bioethics: From the End of Courtship to the Beginning of Cloning*

Kass's reading of Genesis is the lever for his critique of the "post-moral ambience" of modern liberal democracies. At the end of his discussion of the tower of Babel, Kass describes modernity as a return to the Babylonian vision. The language of Cartesian mathematics and method, he states, promises that the world might become a cosmopolitan city devoted to universal "equality in freedom," a city made ever more comfortable by the conquest of nature for the relief of man's estate. As an antidote to the proliferation of opposing nations, "our modern Babel constructs the United Nations, the worldwide web, the globalized economy, and the biomedical project to recreate human nature without imperfections." Kass suggests, however, that modern Babel falls prey to the same failures as its ancient predecessor. Its inhabitants—we—know no reverence, are inhospitable to procreation and childrearing, lack nonarbitrary and nonartificial standards for human conduct, and are unable to be self-critical. "The city is back," Kass laments, "and so, too, is Sodom, babbling and dissipating away."[54]

In his essay, "The End of Courtship," Kass indicts liberal democracy and modernity for "hamper[ing] courtship and marriage" by destroying "cultural gravity about sex, marriage and the life-cycle."[55] Liberal principles were, for the Founding Fathers, "narrowly political"; morals and mores were informed by biblical religion. But as our nation became more pluralistic and secularized—and as rights became the sole coinage of moral discourse—liberal principles became "corrupted by expansion and exaggeration."[56] "The right ordering of family relations" is lost on "democratic man" for whom "all hierarchy is suspect, all distinctions are odious, and all claims on his modesty and respect are confining." Announcing himself liberated from archaic and stultifying

[54] Ibid., 242–43.
[55] Leon R. Kass, "The End of Courtship," *The Public Interest* 126 (Winter 1997): 39–63, here 44.
[56] Leon R. Kass, "Introduction," in idem, *Life, Liberty and the Defense of Dignity: The Challenge for Bioethics* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2002), 13.

norms, "democratic man" asserts, "We're all pals now." Filial piety and paternal excellence are precarious virtues, Kass notes, and "the supply may be shorter than ever." Evidence of our moral decline lies in "the sins that unfatherly fathers visit upon their sons and grandsons." Kass avers that "Canaan is again cursed to live slavishly like a pagan."[57]

But the brunt of Kass's critique falls upon unmotherly women who are all too willing accomplices in the decline of traditional family values. The "most devastating" social outgrowth of the Enlightenment, according to Kass, is the sexual revolution, "facilitated by cheap and effective birth control."[58] Liberated from the generative consequences of sexual activity, a woman can declare herself free from "the teleological meaning of her sexuality—as free as a man appears to be from his."[59] The first casualty of the sexual revolution is "the supreme virtue of the virtuous woman"—modesty—"a necessary condition of transforming a man's lust into love." But immodesty is endorsed by public sex education which promotes "safe sex," treats contraception as a morally neutral tool, and regards "offspring and disease as equally avoidable side-effects of sex, whose primary purpose is pleasure."[60]

Fueled by the sexual revolution, feminism turns against marriage by radically attacking sex roles: in particular, "the worth of motherhood and the vanishing art of homemaking."[61] Equal education tempts women to put career above marriage, and the legitimate quest for meaningful work can lead to a "disordering of loves" in which economic independence—"no asset for marital stability"—comes at the price of a commitment to husband and children.[62] "Without powerful nonliberal cultural forces, such as traditional biblical religion, that defend sex-linked roles, androgyny in education and employment is the likely outcome."[63]

With the rise of out-of-wedlock births and divorce, the stable, monogamous marriage is no longer the accepted cultural norm. As Kass puts it, "new family forms allow children to have between zero and four parents." In the meantime, the feminist and the gay rights movements have pushed for the reproductive "rights" of single women, homosexual men, and lesbians, treating natural heterosexual difference and its preeminence as "matters of cultural construction." "With adultery almost as American as apple pie, few appreciate the awe-ful shame of the Scarlet Letter. And the sexual abominations of Leviticus—incest, bestiality, and homosexuality—are going the way of all flesh: homosexuality with religious blessings, no less!"[64] These social changes are the "bittersweet fruits" of the successes of modern democratic cultures that value freedom, equality and universal, secularized education and are characterized by prosperity, mobility and progress in science and technology.[65]

Kass's diagnosis of the demise of courtship contains the kernel of his critique of contemporary bioethics. The "post-moral ambience" of modern liberal democracies explains both why marriage has become so troubled and why, in matters bioethical, "we are getting used to everything," for "'human nature' is dead in the water as a moral guide."[66] When contraception is justified as part of a woman's right to privacy, abortion as belonging to a woman's right over her body, and procreation as a matter of a woman's right to reproduce, Kass tells us, it is hard to make sense of the biblical understanding of male and female as "unavoidably complete and dependent children of the Lord" ordered "to be fruitful and multiply."[67] The easy availability of contraception and abortion bespeaks our "anti-natalist" belief that all children should be wanted: a belief implying, according to Kass, that "only children who fulfill our wants will be fully acceptable."[68] We are on a slippery slope to genetic engineering. Furthermore, contraception and abortion violate women's "generative nature," for, by separating sex from its serious consequences, they foster the irresponsible and ultimately dehumanizing view that sex primarily means self-gratification. And having abandoned the idea that babies have a necessary connection to sex, "it must seem anachronistic to fight, in the name of nature, against IVF and surrogate pregnancy."[69]

[57] Kass, *The Beginning of Wisdom*, 215–16.
[58] Kass, "The End of Courtship," 44.
[59] Ibid., 45.
[60] Ibid., 46.
[61] Ibid., 49.
[62] Ibid., 50–51.
[63] Ibid., 53.
[64] Ibid., 56.
[65] Ibid., 53.
[66] For Kass's reference to "the postmoral ambience in which we now live," see "Cloning and the Posthuman Future" in *Life, Liberty, and the Defense of Dignity*, 141–73, here 144. For his suggestion that in this environment, "human nature is dead in the water as a moral guide," see "The Troubled Dream of Nature as a Moral Guide," 24.
[67] Kass, "The End of Courtship," 53.
[68] Ibid., 62.
[69] Kass, "The Troubled Dream of Nature as a Moral Guide," 24.

Finally, in spite of official opposition to human cloning, the prospect offers "the perfect embodiment of the ruling opinions of the new age: the ultimate single-parent child."[70] Cloning symbolizes our desire to control the future but not to be subject to any control ourselves. Kass warns of "a posthuman future" in which we prevent all genetic disease but only by turning procreation into manufacture, promote safe and shame-free sex but at the expense of romance and lasting intimacy, create "happy souls" but people who want and know only chemically induced satisfactions, and aspire to "ageless bodies" that house people who cannot remember why they want to live for so long.[71]

Because these developments are facilitated by our liberal-democratic values of life (welfare) and liberty (autonomy), we "are slow to recognize" them *as* threats to human dignity. But we are naive to believe that "the evils we fear can be avoided by compassion, respect for autonomy, and regulation." Kass searches for "nonarbitrary standards" based on "unalterable human nature" and known by way of our "repugnance" toward these violations of natural limits.[72] To avoid a posthuman future we need to be devoted not primarily to life and liberty but to a "higher" image of "dignity" rooted in "richer ways of doing, feeling and being." Convinced of the insufficiency of nature for ethics, Kass turns to the idea of "living worthily in God's image" to reveal "our proper standing."[73] Perhaps, he suggests, "we should pay attention to the plan God adopted as an alternative to Babel, walking with Father Abraham."[74]

Kass wants to retrieve what he takes to be "the [biblical] core of our culture's wisdom" that, until the postwar era, comprised "a common and respectful understanding" of sexuality, procreation, nascent life, family, the meanings of mother and father, and links between generations.[75] This would demand, Kass states, the restigmatization of promiscuity and illegitimacy, the reversal of anti-natalist prejudices implicit in the

[70] Kass, "Cloning and the Posthuman Future," 143–44.
[71] Leon R. Kass, "Ageless Bodies, Happy Souls," *The New Atlantis* 1 (Spring 2003): 9–28.
[72] Leon R. Kass, "The Age of Genetic Technology Arrives," in idem, *Life, Liberty, and the Defense of Dignity*, 119–40, here 132, 138.
[73] Leon R. Kass, "The Permanent Limitations of Biology," in idem, *Life, Liberty, and the Defense of Dignity*, 277–97, here 297.
[74] Kass, *The Beginning of Wisdom*, 243.
[75] Leon R. Kass, "Cloning and the Posthuman Future," in idem, *Life, Liberty, and the Defense of Dignity*, 141–73, here 143.

practice of abortion, the correction of anti-generative sex education, and the revalorization of marriage as an ideal, including the encouragement of earlier marriage and child-bearing and the postponement of the training of women for careers. But these reforms would depend on restoring the conditions for successful courtship, especially the virtue of female modesty. But in the age of "democratic man," Kass predicts, the likelihood of this is slim.[76]

I hope it is clear how Kass's Judaic "correction" of Hans Jonas makes Kass at home in the company of the so-called "traditional family values" and "right-to-life" crowd in Washington today. But Kass is no straightforward pro-lifer. Eric Cohen misleads us in a recent essay on "conservative bioethics" when he treats Kass as representative of a "culture of life" movement with roots in the modern natural rights tradition. According to Cohen, the demand for equal respect for innocent human life from conception on comprises the moral bedrock of conservative bioethics. By Cohen's lights, this ontological first principle is the self-evident truth at the core of the Declaration of Independence and makes conservatives the true friends of democratic justice.[77]

Kass's account of dignity, however, is biblical, not modern. Unfortunately, Kass writes (in a reply to one of Cohen's earlier pieces), the American idea of equality "is not grounded in something elevated called human dignity but in something much lower to the ground: the equal desire to pursue one's own well-being."[78] Living in God's image, however, "is tied not to our weaknesses but to our strengths as god-like beings," and a defender of the biblical sense of human dignity must acknowledge the morally relevant differences between a blastocyst and a baby.[79] Referring to stem-cell research, Kass states, "The argument that we should not wish to live in a society that uses the seeds of the next generation for the sake of its own appeals to the dignity with which we conduct ourselves, not the indisputable equality of the early embryo. It is an argument grounded in prudence and restraint, not in equality and justice."[80] Despite the differences in their reasoning, though, Kass

[76] Kass, "The End of Courtship," 62–63.
[77] Eric Cohen, "Conservative Bioethics and the Search for Wisdom," *Hastings Center Report* 36, no. 1 (2006): 44–56, here 52.
[78] Leon R. Kass, "Human Frailty and Human Dignity," *The New Atlantis* 7 (Fall 2004/Spring 2005): 101–12, here 114.
[79] Ibid., 118.
[80] Ibid.

concedes that, when the chips are down, he "shares Cohen's sensibilities" and "side of the argument."[81]

6. *The Influence of Leo Strauss on Leon Kass*

Kass's rejection of the modern natural rights argument and his appeal to more ancient sources to better protect the moral core of our democracy echo Leo Strauss's *Natural Right and History*. We would be mistaken, I think, to dismiss Kass as a Republican ideologue who tailored his ideas to please the powers-that-be so that he could break out of the ivory tower and into halls of power. His views germinated during thirty years of teaching, first in the early 1970s at the "great books" program of St. John's College in Annapolis where he crossed paths with Leo Strauss, and then at the University of Chicago where Strauss himself had taught for two decades and exerted such an influence, especially through his student, Allan Bloom.

If Jonas was Kass's first teacher in philosophical biology, then Strauss was Kass's professor of philosophical anthropology and theology. Kass's ethical stance is not a calculating power-grab, but, whether one likes it or not, a logical outgrowth of Strauss's misgivings about modernity in general and America in particular. Strauss's leading idea is that modernity is essentially "nihilistic." No longer believing that humanity belongs to a sacred order of creation or an objective order of essences in the totality of nature, moderns think of humanity as "freely projecting existence" who must create values on the basis of nothing but the shifting soil of history. Values, as we have come to say, are "social constructions"; there is no natural or God-given standard of right. According to Strauss, "German historical relativism," epitomized by Heidegger, is the culmination of the modern tenor.[82]

Strauss bids us to return to "Athens" and "Jerusalem" as antidotes to the nihilism and relativism of modernity. But there is a problem. Athens (philosophy) and Jerusalem (the way of Torah) are at loggerheads and cannot be "synthesized." *Philosophy* depends on unaided reason, and presupposes the possibility that the human mind can

[81] Ibid., 117.
[82] See Leo Strauss, "An Introduction to Heideggerian Existentialism," chap. 3 in *The Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism*.

autonomously comprehend "the whole," although, at the end of the day, reason must admit its own finitude and remain open to the infinity of reality and so to the possibility of divine transcendence. *Torah* presupposes the incomprehensibility of the whole to our intellect and so our need for "obedience" to law through faith in a mysterious but omnipotent Creator, although religious piety, too, should admit that it may have given up on reason too soon. Though these two ways of life are incompatible, their irresoluble conflict, according to Strauss, comprises "the secret of the vitality of Western civilization." Neither can prove the other wrong, and yet, because Socrates and the Hebrew Bible provide alternatives to the "nihilism" of modernity, Strauss hopes that they can cohabitate in creative tension.[83]

Although Greek philosophy and the Bible "proceed in entirely different ways"—reason versus revelation—Strauss makes the stunning claim that they agree about "the essential content of morality": that "murder, theft, adultery, etc., are unqualifiedly bad" and that "the proper framework of morality is the patriarchal family, which is, or tends to be, monogamous, and which forms the cell of a society in which the free adult males, and especially the old ones, [properly] dominate" because "the male sex is in principle superior."[84] While Greek philosophy allegedly grounds human patriarchy in natural hierarchy known to reason, the Bible traces human patriarchy to law obeyed out of love of the divine patriarch. Philosophy, however, "weakens the majesty of the moral demands [because they are not backed up by the promises and omnipotence of God]."[85] For this reason, Strauss states, "[divine law] is accepted by Greek philosophy for the education of the many," although "not as something which stands independently."[86]

Though Strauss never quite puts his cards on the table, I conclude that he sides with Socrates over Torah. One cannot preclude the possibility of revelation, but Strauss puts his trust in reason since a believing Jew's faith in revelation ultimately calls for a "childlike obedience" which Strauss, devotee of Socrates that he is, cannot muster.[87] Yet he still insists that "it is impossible [for a Jew] not to remain a Jew,"

[83] Strauss, "Progress or Return?," 270.
[84] Ibid., 246–47.
[85] Ibid., 252.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid., 257.

because it is impossible, even for an unbeliever, "to get rid of one's past by wishing it away."[88]

For the Socratic political philosopher like Strauss, "fear of the Lord" cannot be ruled out as a valid attitude, but revelation must be considered "a noble lie" from the perspective of the philosopher's love of wisdom and faith in reason. But even if biblical religion is false, Strauss suggests, it plays an important role in liberal societies because, left to their own devices, the "hoi polloi," when loosed from "sacred restraints" and allowed to philosophize, tend to end up hedonists, relativists, or nihilists: the "democratic men" described by Kass. So "the many" need the stabilizing "structure" of religion in order to reinforce civic piety. But "the wise" are able to recognize on the basis of reason alone "the natural hierarchy" that ought to inform the good society.[89]

Kass shares Strauss's critique of modernity: a critique foreshadowed by Plato's worries about democracy in his *Republic*. Liberal pluralism produces "souls without longing": a desire for comfort and freedom, but no "high" aspirations and, ultimately, a belief that truth is "relative" and that life is for pleasure—in other words, a version of Plato's democratic soul whose culmination is Nietzsche's "last man." Strauss calls "liberal tolerance" a cover for "nonjudgmental relativism": a commitment to equality ("I'm OK, you're OK") that leads to a refusal to make distinctions between good and evil or to condemn anything absolutely.[90]

Strauss's core idea (elaborated by Allan Bloom) is that "the American mind" is becoming "closed" to the possibility of "higher Truth"—in the name of a liberal, tolerant, and ultimately relativistic "openness to diversity." He worries that the U.S. (and especially its liberal universities) is infected by the very "German historical relativism" that left Weimar with no intellectual defense against Nazism.[91] This leads him

[88] Leo Strauss, "Why We Remain Jews," in idem, *Jewish Philosophy and the Crisis of Modernity*, ed. Kenneth H. Green (Albany: State University Press of New York, 1997), 311–56, here 317.

[89] For Strauss on the role of "divine law" in Greek philosophy, see "Progress or Return?," 256.

[90] See Strauss's critique of the liberalism of Isaiah Berlin in "Relativism," in idem, *The Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism*, chap. 2.

[91] For Strauss's argument that the United States faces a philosophical peril similar to the relativism that weakened Weimar Germany's resistance to Nazism, see Strauss's classic *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950).

to return to Athens and Jerusalem as alternatives to the elements of liberal modernity that incline it toward doom.

Kass purports to side with Jerusalem over Athens, Abraham over Socrates. He wants to believe that revelation conveys the Truth, not merely a "noble lie" that serves political ends. Kass is trying to take "the leap" that Strauss, who remained a "zetetic skeptic" like Socrates, seemed unable to take.[92] Though Kass claims to speak from "Jerusalem," I shall argue that he really arrives at his conclusions on Straussian, i.e., philosophical, grounds. But practically speaking, it doesn't matter, for his social agenda converges with Strauss's claim that the moral substance of Greek philosophy and the Bible is the same: the second table of the Decalogue and patriarchy.

7. *Kass's Natural-Law Judaism and Neoconservative Politics*

Earlier I argued that Hans Jonas's invocation of "humanity in the image of God" owes a greater debt to ontology than to theology. Jonas, taking his cue from Kant's "enlightened" effort to defend "religion within the limits of reason," fashions a rapprochement between Athens and Jerusalem: an ontology of nature that can—but need not—be supplemented by a theology of creation. Jonas is a kind of "natural theologian" whose imperative of responsibility comprises "natural law." For just this reason, Leon Kass finds Jonas's defense of our responsibility for future generations to be untrue to Jonas's own Jewish heritage. A satisfactory account of the meaning of human sexuality and reproduction, according to Kass, requires that the way of nature—and Jonas's path, too—be "corrected" by revelation and divine legislation. But does Kass's account depend on his reading of Genesis—or is it an outgrowth of his "more natural science"?[93]

When Kass speaks of the "more loving and just tradition" embodied by Genesis, it is not clear that he is speaking as a Jew, and this for several reasons. First, Kass reads Genesis without seriously engaging the

[92] For the interpretation of Strauss as a "zetetic skeptic," see the writings of Steven Smith of Yale University, e.g., *Reading Leo Strauss: Politics, Philosophy, Judaism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

[93] For Kass's fullest development of Jonas's idea of "an existential interpretation of biological facts," see Leon R. Kass, *Toward a More Natural Science: Biology and Human Affairs* (New York: Free Press, 1985).

other four books of the Pentateuch, not to mention the vast corpus of rabbinic and postrabbinic interpretation that, according to Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, defines what "Torah"—or revelation—is. Second, Kass admits to approaching Genesis as a humanities professor: not on the basis of "a leap of faith or commitment in advance to the truth of the biblical story, but, rather, [through] a suspension of disbelief."[94] He holds himself open to glean what lessons he can learn from what the biblical tales offer him, reading the text in the "wisdom-seeking spirit of philosophy." But as Leo Strauss puts it, "By saying that we wish to hear first and then to act to decide, we have already decided in favor of Athens against Jerusalem."[95]

Finally, Kass acknowledges how closely his view approximates a natural-law perspective. The Noahide code, he states, stands on ontological ground more solid than the needs of society, the will of the victim, or even the authority of divine commandment.[96] Though Kass contends that "the most important insights on which decent society rests—for example, the taboos against incest, cannibalism, murder, and adultery—are too important to be imperiled by reason's poor power to give them convincing defense," he also reminds us, echoing Strauss, that "the entire second table of the Decalogue propounds not so much divine law but natural law, suitable for man as man, not only for Jew or Christian."[97] And these "reasons immanent in the nature of things" were evident even to pagans like Aristotle, though the vehicle of our discernment of these taboos is not pure reason, but, as Kass calls it, "the wisdom of repugnance."[98] Regarding the Noahide covenant, political philosophy can at most show the "utility, even the necessity" of faith in divine providence. But even if "decent human life requires a belief in a secure future and in the justice of law and the sureness of punishment," and these beliefs are "considerably more stable in the presence of a belief in divine backing," this impulse, Kass concedes, "may originate, without external cause, entirely from within the human soul."[99]

[94] Kass, *The Beginning of Wisdom*, 17.
[95] Leo Strauss, "Jerusalem and Athens: Some Preliminary Reflections," in Green, ed. *Jewish Philosophy and the Crisis of Modernity*, 377–405, here 380.
[96] Kass, *The Beginning of Wisdom*, 174, 178.
[97] Leon Kass, "Death with Dignity and the Sanctity of Life," in idem, *Life, Liberty and the Defense of Dignity*, 231–56, here 236 and 239.
[98] Kass, *The Beginning of Wisdom*, 187. For Kass on "the wisdom of repugnance," see "Cloning and the Posthuman Future."
[99] Kass, *The Beginning of Wisdom*, 194–95.

As for the erotic side of human nature, Kass admits to embracing the idea, associated with the natural-law tradition and "a more ancient and teleological understanding of nature," that "a proper understanding of the inner procreative meaning of... human sexuality points exactly to the institution of exogamous, monogamous [and heterosexual] marriage as the institution best suited to rearing decent and upright children, that is, children who are truly human (or, as our text might put it, worthily in God's image)."[100] Kass, to be sure, states that "since moral views rooted in natural hierarchy will never be popular with more than a few, we should put our trust neither in nature nor philosophy, but in our religious traditions."[101] But in saying this, he *seems* to side with Strauss's pagan defense of piety: that although "natural hierarchy" can be defended on philosophical grounds, the wise man's reasons will fail to persuade "the many" in a democratic culture, and so the promotion of "family values" and patriarchy in particular are better left in the hands of religion.

When Kass refers to the insufficiency of nature and reason for ethics, however, he claims to speak not merely from a political perspective, but from belief in the superiority of revelation over philosophy, Jerusalem over Athens. Here he goes beyond Leo Strauss's Socratic or "zetetic" skepticism. For Kass concludes that "only with the Bible's help" could he have discovered the truths he thinks he has found, and so "my sympathies have shifted toward the biblical pole of the age-old tension between Athens and Jerusalem," for "I am no longer confident of the sufficiency of unaided human reason. I find congenial the moral sensibilities and demands of the Torah, though I must confess that my practice is still wanting."[102]

Nature is an insufficient guide, for the heavens do not teach us how to live and, although sex has "inner procreative meaning," proper marriage and patriarchy do not come naturally, especially given males' "inborn polygamous nature."[103] And philosophy is inadequate because even though the Bible's lessons are available to "the wisdom-seeking mind," the inaccessibility of these lessons to reason unaided by revelation indicates "the presence of some higher yet mysterious cosmic power to which human beings can and should be open."[104] In short, "the right

[100] Ibid., 274–75.
[101] Kass, "The Troubled Dream of Nature as a Moral Guide," 24.
[102] Kass, *The Beginning of Wisdom*, xiv.
[103] Ibid., 250.
[104] Ibid., 195.

ordering of loves" requires revelation, for "natural sexual impulses will not by themselves establish the proper institutional forms."[105]

Kass's claim is puzzling, for an advocate of natural law or natural theology need not hold that we are immediately inclined, regardless of the quality of our education, to apprehend moral truths or develop moral virtue. Human nature requires cultivation if we are to have any hope of understanding or actualizing our potential. The real question is whether the ends, the proper goals of culture and education, can be discerned on the basis of reasonable inquiry into the human condition. Kass's protests notwithstanding, one senses that the truths he traces to revelation are foregone conclusions based on his own philosophical stance toward life. God's manifest wisdom in structuring human nature the way He has, not His incomprehensibility, comprises the ground of Kass's faith in revelation. And, as Strauss, puts it, "natural theology... is the forgotten basis of modern free thought."[106]

If Kass is really a natural philosopher wearing the mantle of Judaism, then his arguments about the moral norms that follow from human nature must be addressed in philosophical terms. I think that Hans Jonas's reluctance to deduce moral norms like heterosexuality, gender roles, the nuclear family and patriarchy from his "existential interpretation of the biological facts" proves to be an asset, not a liability. Though his imperative of responsibility—"Don't do what risks jeopardizing the existence or essence of humanity"—may seem too "thin" and lacking in content from Kass's perspective, Jonas might reply that Kass projects his own moral and social judgments onto nature and so ends up with norms that are all too "thick" to be universal. The question for bioethics is: at what point should a possible intervention be prohibited on the grounds that it violates what Jonas calls "the integrity of the human essence" or, in a biblical key, the *imago Dei*?

Jonas's imperative gives us a direction or orientation, but no decision-procedure leading from "the human essence" to what is right in any particular case. Still, it puts us on guard against nightmares lurking within the utopian dream of manufacturing a "new and improved" humanity. This is the conservatism in Jonas that resonates so deeply with Kass. But Jonas never launches into the full-scale critique of liberal democratic culture that Kass, following Leo Strauss and Allan Bloom, does. On their view of modernity, the liberal values of freedom and

[105] Ibid., 194, 250, and 294.
[106] Strauss, "Progress or Return?," 267.

equality cease to be "narrowly political" and instead masquerade as the ultimate ends of human life, thereby corrupting culture as a whole. "Democratic man" has a shallow soul: hollowed out by the relativism inherent in the view that all choices are equally good so long as they are freely chosen. And the promise of radical autonomy tempts moderns with the fantasy of technological liberation from "merely natural" constraints.

Kass extends the Straussian critique of modernity to the sphere of bioethics. "The wisdom of repugnance" before the prospect of human cloning awakens Kass's antipathies toward a whole set of social changes that allegedly pave the way to cloning because they overextend the values of freedom and equality and comprise "violations of human nature": feminism, the sexual revolution (spurred on by the availability of safe and effective contraception), the pro-choice movement on abortion, the gay rights movement, and the acceptance of divorce and arrangements other than the "traditional nuclear family." So-called "women's liberation" is the root of the "postmoral ambience" into which "cloning fits perfectly." This makes Kass sympathetic to the "family values" agenda of the neo-conservative movement. Hans Jonas, so far as I can tell, neither anticipates nor shares this expansion of his critique of biotechnology.

If Kass's case for revelation is really a version of natural theology, then his position confronts the familiar criticisms of natural-law ethics, and, I have argued, Jonas's minimalist version of natural law fares better. But given that Kass professes to speak from "the biblical pole of the age-old tension between Athens and Jerusalem," he must address William Galston's claim that one should hesitate to refer, as neoconservatives including Kass tend to do, of "biblical religion." For "Judaism (including Jewish orthodoxy, which makes common cause with Catholics and evangelicals on other matters) is much more accommodating" about the legitimate uses of biotechnology than "the Catholic-evangelical entente." Galston writes:

> Judaism accords a very high value to reproduction and healing, and less value to the status of nonimplanted pre-embryos. It also sets forth an activist vision of human beings as co-creators of the world. These basic features of the Jewish outlook lead it to embrace many applications of biotechnology.[107]

[107] William A. Galston, "What's at Stake in Biotech?," 106.

I am not qualified to assess Galston's claim, but I hope to open it up for dialogue among those who are, for only then can Jews judge whether Kass's normative pronouncements fulfill what David Hartman calls the teaching of the rabbis: namely, that "the Sinai moment of revelation, as mediated by ongoing discussion in the tradition, does not require passive obedience and submission to the wisdom of the past," but instead requires Jews to "live by the Torah as if it had been given in [our] own time."[108] For Leo Strauss, "Jerusalem" was a symbol for the recovery of Jewish identity—a kind of "inner Judaism" in his own case—against a modernity whose "enlightened" solution to "the Jewish question"—namely, assimilation—had proven to be a disaster. How ironic it is that Kass's return to "Jerusalem" allows him to assimilate into the civil religion espoused by the Bush administration. Though halakhic Jews may find Kass's reliance on Genesis so restricted that he shouldn't be taken seriously as a *Jewish* voice, the fact remains that in Leon Kass the White House has found its official standard-bearer for the neoconservative agenda in bioethics, thereby promoting its arguably evangelical aims in the guise of an inclusive "biblical morality."

[108] David Hartman, *A Living Covenant: The Innovative Spirit in Traditional Judaism* (New York: Free Press; London: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1985), 9.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

CLONING AND CORPOREALITY[1]

Bernard G. Prusak

Critical discussions of cloning to produce children have, predictably, multiplied exponentially since the February 1997 announcement of the birth of the sheep Dolly, produced by the method of somatic cell nuclear transfer (SCNT). In reaction to breakthrough work on frogs and toads in the late 1960s, there had been some lively discussion in the early 1970s of the possibility of cloning to produce children—perhaps most notoriously Willard Gaylin's 1972 article, "The Frankenstein Myth Becomes a Reality—We Have the Awful Knowledge To Make Exact Copies of Human Beings"[2]—but as recently as 1994 the legal scholar John Robertson dismissed SCNT as "highly unlikely to be accomplished [on mammals] in even the mid-range future."[3] After Dolly, prospects changed. In February 2004, South Korean researchers reported the derivation of a pluripotent embryonic stem cell line from a cloned human blastocyst.[4] In the words of science writer Gina Kolata, this work made "the birth of a cloned baby suddenly more feasible."[5]

One of the principal figures in the early 1970s discussions of cloning was Hans Jonas. Drawing on a 1972 paper by Leon Kass, which itself

[1] I am grateful to Margaret Kowalsky, Lydia Moland, the philosophy faculties of Creighton University and Providence College, and the humanities faculty of Villanova University for discussions of earlier versions of this article. (Lydia Moland discussed several versions with me.) I also thank Frederick Ferré for his comments on my paper and Hava Tirosh-Samuelson for inviting me to write this article to begin with.

[2] Willard Gaylin, "The Frankenstein Myth Becomes a Reality—We Have the Awful Knowledge To Make Exact Copies of Human Beings," *The New York Times Magazine*, March 5, 1972, 12ff.

[3] John A. Robertson, "The Question of Human Cloning," *Hastings Center Report* 24, no. 2 (1994): 6–14, here 6.

[4] Woo Suk Hwang et al., "Evidence of a Pluripotent Human Embryonic Stem Cell Line Derived from a Cloned Blastocyst," *Science* 303, no. 5664 (March 12, 2004): 1669–74.

[5] Gina Kolata, "Cloning Creates Human Embryos," *The New York Times*, February 12, 2004, sec. A. It should also be noted that most of Hwang's work has since been discredited as fraudulent, a story that broke toward the end of 2005.

drew on a 1970 book by Paul Ramsey, Jonas's 1974 "Biological Engineering—A Preview" develops what he calls an "existential critique" of cloning to produce children, focusing on "the *situation* of the human clone," or in other words the "subjective terms of his being."[6] Jonas's paper has, to date, withstood the test of time: it is regularly cited in contemporary discussions of cloning to produce children, and, even when it is not, some semblance of the critique it develops often is.[7] To be sure, however, Jonas's critique has provoked criticism. The bioethicists Bonnie Steinbock and Dan Brock, among others, reject Jonas's critique as resting on "the fallacy of genetic determinism."[8] Others question whether Jonas's critique applies to all cases of cloning to produce children, or only to cases where the act of cloning is motivated by a desire to replicate an outstanding individual.[9] Proponents of Jonas's critique have not engaged these criticisms, and so a re-evaluation of his critique is called for.

Before we turn to this work, it might well be asked why the prospect of cloning has so exercised people over the last several decades. In a brief survey of arguments about cloning then and now, one of the founding figures of bioethics, Daniel Callahan, has remarked that, for Ramsey,

[6] Hans Jonas, "Biological Engineering—A Preview," in idem, *Philosophical Essays: From Ancient Creed to Technological Man* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1974), 141–67, here 159, 160. This essay was first published in English; it appeared later in German under the title "Laßt uns einen Menschen klonieren: Von der Eugenik zur Gentechnologie," in Hans Jonas, *Technik, Medizin, und Ethik: Zur Praxis des Prinzips Verantwortung* (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1985), 162–203.

[7] See, for example, *Human Cloning and Human Dignity: The Report of the President's Council on Bioethics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2002), 114–16; and the Pontifical Academy for Life's 1997 "Reflections on Cloning," available online at www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_academies/acdlife/ documents/rc_pa_acdlife_doc_30091997_clon_en.html.

[8] The phrase is Bonnie Steinbock's; see her "Cloning Human Beings: Sorting through the Ethical Issues," in *Human Cloning: Science, Ethics, and Public Policy*, ed. Barbara MacKinnon (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 68–84, here 72. See further, among others, Ronald Bailey, "The Twin Paradox: What Exactly Is Wrong with Cloning People?," in *The Human Cloning Debate*, ed. Glenn McGee (Berkeley: Berkeley Hills Books, 1998), 181–188, here 183; Michael Tooley, "The Moral Status of the Cloning of Humans" in *Human Cloning*, ed. James H. Humber and Robert F. Almeder (Totowa, NJ: Humana Press, 1998), 65–101, here 85; Lee M. Silver, "Popular Cloning versus Scientific Cloning in Ethical Debates," *New York University Journal of Legislation and Public Policy* 4, no. 1 (2000–2001): 47–57, here 52; and President Clinton's National Bioethics Advisory Commission, "The Science and Application of Cloning," in *Clones and Clones: Facts and Fantasies about Human Cloning*, ed. Martha C. Nussbaum and Cass R. Sunstein (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998), 289–94, here 39.

[9] See Dena S. Davis, *Genetic Dilemmas: Reproductive Technology, Parental Choices, and Children's Futures* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 119.

Kass, and Jonas, cloning was "one of the symbolic issues of what was, at that time, called the 'new biology,'" first and foremost molecular genetics. Ramsey, Kass, and Jonas became interested in cloning "in its own right and... as a token of the radical genetic possibilities" that the new biology seemed to present.[10] We now know that these thinkers were prescient: it seems likely that the procedures of cloning will someday be deemed safe enough to overcome the objection that using these procedures on humans would be far too risky. And some thinkers predict—some with enthusiasm, others with trepidation—that cloning will be only the beginning of what we will be able to do.

Jonas, like Ramsey and Kass, foresaw this development with trepidation. The mood today in bioethics is quite different. Again to quote Callahan, in bioethical circles today, "there is by far a more favorable response to scientific and technological developments than was... the case" in the 1960s and early 1970s; "quasi-libertarian attitudes toward reproductive rights" have become prevalent; and procedures to relieve infertility have come to enjoy a prima facie claim on support. In Callahan's judgment, these changes in the cultural and medical climate "increase the likelihood that human cloning will be hard to resist in the future."[11] This judgment might come as a surprise to someone who has read about cloning only in the popular press, where human reproductive cloning is typically presented as universally abhorred and what Kass has controversially called "the wisdom of repugnance" rules.[12] But the story is different in the bioethics literature, so different in fact that, after working through this literature, it can be difficult to recall even what is *strange* about cloning.[13] In this article, I seek to retrieve whatever wisdom is to be found in Jonas's earlier reflections.

(Also by way of introduction, as I hope my title suggests, cloning raises philosophically puzzling questions about human embodiment. So I also hope that this article stimulates interest beyond the bioethical question it examines. My own interest in bioethics, like Jonas's, goes hand in hand with interests in philosophical anthropology.)

[10] Daniel Callahan, "Cloning: Then and Now," *Cambridge Quarterly of Healthcare Ethics* 7 (1998): 141–44, here 141.

[11] Ibid., 141, 144.

[12] See, for example, James Wood's comment in his review of Kazuo Ishiguro's novel *Never Let Me Go*, "The Human Difference," *The New Republic*, May 16, 2005, 38: "the cloning of human beings hardly needs denunciation."

[13] Cf. Robin Marantz Henig, *Pandora's Baby: How the First Test Tube Babies Sparked the Reproductive Revolution* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2004), 245–60.

1. *The Critique*

In the bioethics literature, Jonas's critique is rendered quite freely. According to Steinbock:

> Jonas argued that each of us develops a personality and becomes a self by making choices. However, a cloned human being would know the choices that were made by the person whose genome he or she shared.... so the clone would know a great deal about himself and his future. He would know what he would look like as an adult, the diseases to which he would be prone, the talents he would have, and so forth. Thus he would be unable to create and become his own self.

Yet, Steinbock counters, it is just not so: since genetic determinism is false, it is not true that the clone's knowledge of her genome brings knowledge of the course of her life. Though, Steinbock allows, "[a] clone might have a pretty good idea of what she would look like at age fifty" and further "would have considerable knowledge about the diseases she was at risk for," still "she could not assume... that she would have the same abilities and talents as her progenitor, for [these] depend at least as much on environmental factors as on genetic inheritance."[14] So Jonas's critique misses the mark. In brief, once we understand that genetic determinism is false, we see that the clone would be as free as any other person to lead a life of her own.

According to Brock:

> A later twin created by human cloning, Jonas argues, knows, or at least believes she knows, too much about herself. For there is already in the world another person, her earlier twin, who from the same genetic starting point has made the life choices that are still in the later twin's future. It will seem that her life has already been lived and played out by another, that her fate is already determined; she will lose the sense of human possibility in freely and spontaneously creating her own future and authentic self.[15]

Brock allows that Jonas's critique can be interpreted as not assuming genetic determinism. The clone, Brock writes, might well understand that "he is not determined to follow in his earlier twin's footsteps, but

[14] Steinbock, "Cloning Human Beings," 72.

[15] Dan W. Brock, "Cloning Human Beings: An Assessment of the Ethical Issues Pro and Con," in Nussbaum and Sunstein, eds., *Clones and Clones*, 141–67, here 153. See also Allen Buchanan, Dan W. Brock, Norman Daniels, and Daniel Wikler, *From Chance to Choice: Genetics and Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 197.

nevertheless the earlier twin's life might always haunt him, standing as an undue influence on his life," as if he were living under the shadow of his progenitor. Yet Brock counters that "the force of the objection still seems to rest on the false assumption that having the same genome as his earlier twin unduly restricts his freedom to create a different life and self [from] the earlier twin's." Are we to agree, Brock asks, that the clone has been wronged "merely because [he] is likely to *believe* that his future is already determined, when that belief is false and supported only by the crudest determinism"?[16] Writing with Norman Daniels, Brock answers this question with the following analogy:

> Suppose you drive down the twin's street in your new car that is just like his, knowing that when he sees you he is likely to believe that you have stolen his car and, therefore, to abandon his driving plans for the day. You have not violated his property right to his car even though he may feel the same loss of opportunity to drive that day as if you had in fact stolen his car. In each case [namely, that in which his progenitor had gone before him and that in which his car had gone before him] he is mistaken that his open future or car has been taken from him, and so no right of his to [the car or the open future] has been violated.[17]

Steinbock eliminates all nuance from Jonas's critique; Brock preserves some, but his analogy seems facile. The situations may be analogous, but to what extent? The clone would be simply wrong that her car had been stolen, but would she be simply wrong in seeing herself in her progenitor? The answer to this question does not seem self-evident. When we begin to think about the situation of a clone, *we do not know our way about*—precedents and analogies seem lacking—and so need to exercise our imagination.[18] Moreover, as Jonas observed, the extent of genetic determinism in any given case is a "moot question": it cannot be definitively answered.[19] As Kass has more recently observed, though genotype is not destiny, "genotype obviously matters plenty,"[20] and perhaps enough so that it would not be *unreasonable* for the clone to think,

[16] Brock, "Cloning Human Beings," 153–54. See also *From Chance to Choice*, 197–98.

[17] Buchanan, Brock, Daniels, and Wikler, *From Chance to Choice*, 198.

[18] See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe, 3rd, bilingual ed. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958), pt. 1, §123, p. 49.

[19] Jonas, "Biological Engineering," 160.

[20] Leon R. Kass, "The Wisdom of Repugnance," in idem and James Q. Wilson, *The Ethics of Human Cloning* (Washington, DC: AEI Press, 1998), 3–60, here 34.

on seeing his progenitor, there go I. But we need to think this matter through, which is why rereading Jonas is worth doing.

Jonas prefaces his discussion of the ethics of human reproductive cloning with an account of how it might be done, namely, by SCNT. He then turns to what is produced by cloning: in his words, "A genetic double of the donor, with the same degree of resemblance of phenotype as is known from identical twins," only with a "time lag" separating the donor and the clone.[21] This statement needs revision or at least qualification in two respects. It should be noted, first, that "the same degree of resemblance of phenotype as is known from identical twins" might not always be produced.[22] The reason is that "there may be imprinting or epigenetic reprogramming differences in gene expression early on that may affect the physical and mental characteristics of the clone." In other words, the same genes have different phenotypic expressions, depending upon environment and especially the intrauterine environment, making differences to one degree or another inevitable. Second, a clone would be the genetic double of or "genetically identical to [her] donor only in those cases in which the same woman donated both egg and somatic cell nucleus, to produce an embryonic cell of herself." The reason here is the mitochondrial genes, "a small number of protein-producing genes...which are inherited from the female source of the egg." Because of these mitochondrial genes, only a woman who cloned herself using her own egg could produce a genetic double. Otherwise, the clone can be termed only "genetically virtually identical" to the donor.

To close his prefatory remarks, Jonas considers different possible reasons for cloning a human being. Citing Kass, he includes among other reasons "replication of the healthy to bypass the risk of genetic disease" and "provision of a child to an infertile couple." Yet he identifies the perpetuation and multiplication of excellence—the replication of outstanding individuals—as "the main answer to the question of *why* cloning should be done at all." In his estimation, "It is certainly the most exalted of the proposed aims" and thus "more seductive than any other." Accordingly, Jonas proposes to focus his critique on the situation of a clone of a "distinguished donor." Remarkably, he claims that such a case "serves to bring into sharper light what would apply

[21] Jonas, "Biological Engineering," 156.
[22] See *Human Cloning and Human Dignity*, 61, 62 for the information in this paragraph.

to all cases, i.e., to the cloning proposition as such."[23] We will have to evaluate this claim.

To reiterate, Jonas seeks to investigate "what to *be* a clone would mean for the subject concerned." His discussion of the ethics of human reproductive cloning is to take the form of an "existential critique," where "critique" seems to have much the same meaning that Immanuel Kant gave it, namely, an inquiry into sources and limits.[24] More concretely, by referring to his discussion as a "critique," Jonas signals that he means to consider how *originating* as a clone would *limit* a person's freedom. Jonas seeks to achieve what he calls "transempirical certainty": insight into the "essence" of being a clone—again, "what to *be* a clone would mean for the subject concerned"—such that what we learn from "the single, unspecified case X" would hold for all such flesh-and-blood cases.[25]

His way into this matter is to ask what is essential to what he calls "unprejudiced selfhood." In brief:

> What matters is that the sexually produced genotype is a novum in itself, unknown to all to begin with and still to reveal itself to [its bearer] and fellow men alike. Ignorance is here the precondition of freedom: the new throw of the dice has to discover itself in the guideless effort of living its life for the first and only time, i.e., to *become* itself in meeting a world as unprepared for the newcomer as [the newcomer] is for himself.[26]

Remarkably, neither Steinbock nor Brock challenges this claim. Instead, critics of Jonas's critique challenge whether the clone too is not in fact "a novum in itself, unknown to all to begin with," and so whether the clone too does not enjoy the "ignorance" necessary to lead a life of his or her own. But let us ask in order to understand Jonas better: Is it true that foreknowledge of the course of our lives would limit our freedom to become ourselves and thus put at risk our "selfhood"?

[23] Jonas, "Biological Engineering," 156–58. Jonas draws on Leon R. Kass's "Making Babies: The New Biology and the 'Old' Morality," first published in 1972 and republished in Kass's *Toward a More Natural Science: Biology and Human Affairs* (New York: Free Press, 1985), 43–79, here 65–6. Kass draws in turn on Paul Ramsey's *Fabricated Man: The Ethics of Genetic Control* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970).
[24] Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, ed. Raymund Schmidt, 3rd ed. (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1990), 8, Axii; English trans., *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1929), 9.
[25] Jonas, "Biological Engineering," 158.
[26] Ibid., 159. In trying to make sense of this passage, I consulted "Laßt uns einen Menschen klonieren," 188.

It is an imposing question. To begin with, theologians like Augustine and philosophers like Bertrand Russell have claimed that foreknowledge does not preclude free will. According to Augustine, "Simply because God foreknows your future happiness... it does not follow that you will be happy against your will."[27] That God foreknows what we shall will does not change that we will it. And inasmuch as we will it, we must agree that it has not been forced on us from outside, and thus that it is properly called free as we use this word.[28] Russell asks us to "imagine a set of beings who know the whole future with absolute certainty" and to consider "whether they could have anything that we should call free will." He claims that they do, inasmuch as freedom, "in any valuable sense, demands only that our volitions shall be, as they are, the result of our own desires, not of an outside force compelling us to will what we would rather not will."[29] There is much to say about both of these accounts, but I limit myself to what is relevant to Jonas's critique. Augustine's God and Russell's imaginary beings have the foreknowledge that Jonas claims is antithetical to our freedom and pernicious to our selfhood. We can put aside God's foreknowledge, as it is unavailable to us. Should we say that it is *thankfully* unavailable to us? According to Russell, whether we have this foreknowledge or not makes no difference to our "freedom... in any valuable sense." But this claim seems wrong. It does not seem to apply to beings like us. Imagine that you could foresee the future. Would you enjoy "freedom... in any valuable sense," or would you not rather be deprived of the freedom to discover yourself as you go about living? Note that you could not be a surprise to yourself; you would know the answer to the question of who you are before ever seeking to learn it—which means that you could never be a question to yourself. To be sure, we could say that a discovery or surprise foreseen is still a discovery or surprise; but then we would be speaking words without sense. Moreover: Without this freedom to discover yourself, would you not in fact be dispossessed of yourself? For who you would be would be out of your hands and thus

[27] Augustine, *De libero arbitrio*, 3.3.7.28, available online at http://individual.utoronto.ca/pking/resources/augustine/De_libero_arbitrio.txt; English trans., *On Free Choice of the Will*, trans. Thomas Williams (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993), 76.

[28] I do not pretend to have done Augustine justice here. See further Vance G. Morgan, "Foreknowledge and Human Freedom in Augustine," *Journal of Philosophical Research* 19 (1994): 223–42.

[29] Bertrand Russell, *Our Knowledge of the External World* (London: Routledge, 1914), 238, 239.

paradoxically alien to you—paradoxically, because you would someday be *it* by your own doing. But the crucial point is that it would not be yours to be otherwise. You would be, strange to say, a prisoner to your future self. In sum, it seems that enjoying "selfhood"—in other words, being able to consider ourselves and our lives *our own* to shape and lead, or being able to consider ourselves the *subjects* of our lives—requires the freedom to discover ourselves, which itself has as a necessary condition an open future, unknown to us.

Jonas's reflections on "the *situation* of the human clone—an immanent matter of his experience and that of those around him"—will allow us to revisit these points. (So too, by the way, would reflection on why the damned in Dante's *Inferno* can see the future. They are thereby deprived of both freedom and hope.)[30] For now, consider Jonas's claim that "the simple and unprecedented fact is that the clone knows (or believes to know) altogether too much about himself and is known (or is believed to be known) altogether too well to others." According to Jonas, these facts would prove "paralyzing for the spontaneity of becoming himself."[31] An example might help.

The bioethicist John Harris, in a book that has been praised as "systematically, comprehensively and ruthlessly demolish[ing] the opposition to cloning," remarks that "presumably a cell of [Lenin's body in Moscow] could be de-nucleated and Lenin's genome cloned." Yet, as Harris observes, much has changed since "Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov was born on 10 April 1870 in the town of Simbirsk on the Volga." Further:

> We cannot re-create pre-revolutionary Russia; we cannot simulate his environment and education; we cannot re-create his parents to bring him up and influence his development as profoundly as they undoubtedly did; we cannot make the thought of Karl Marx seem as hopeful as it must then have done.[32]

In brief, all that cloning could do is to reproduce Lenin's genome. If *le style, c'est l'homme même*, we could not reproduce the same man.

[30] Dante Alighieri, *Inferno*, trans. Allen Mandelbaum, bilingual ed. (New York: Bantam, 1980), canto x, 91.

[31] Jonas, "Biological Engineering," 161.

[32] John Harris, *On Cloning* (London: Routledge, 2004), 49. See the back cover for the praise of Harris's book as demolishing the opposition. Compare, by the way, Wolfgang Becker's film *Good Bye, Lenin*.

The question to consider here is whether it makes any sense to say that this clone—call him the young Lenin—would know (or believe to know) altogether too much about himself and would be known (or would be believed to be known) altogether too well to others. Should we not rather say that he comes to the world as "a novum in itself, unknown to all to begin with," and thus enjoys to the same extent as any other person the "ignorance" necessary to lead a life of his own? Unless we believe, against all the evidence, that genes *make* a person without further ado, it seems that we must agree that this clone does *not* know altogether too much about himself and is *not* known altogether too well to others.

Here is Jonas's response:

> It is all a matter much more of supposed than real knowledge, of opinion than truth.... [The genotype] is *made* [a person's] fate by the very assumptions in cloning him.... It does not matter whether replication of genotype really entails repetition of life performance: the donor has been chosen with some such idea, and that idea is tyrannical in effect. It does not matter what the real relation of "nature and nurture," of genetic premise and contingent environment is in forming a person and his possibilities: their interplay has been falsified by both the subject and the environment having been "primed." ...No matter whether the "knowledge" is true or false...it is pernicious to the task of selfhood: existentially significant is what the clone *thinks*—is compelled to think—of himself.[33]

Now, what is Jonas saying here? One interpretation might be that he is saying that the basic problem is that there is a common public misunderstanding of the relationship between genetics and psychology, namely, "that genes determine psychology and personality."[34] The next step of this argument would be to observe that, because of this common public misunderstanding, "it is likely that the parents of the clone will already have formed in their minds a quite definite picture of how the clone will develop," which is to say "a picture that is based on the actual development of the original." Since we can expect or at least fear that this picture "will control the way they rear the child," it follows that the child stands to be deprived of the freedom to lead a life of his own and instead forced to live "in the shadow of the life of the original."

[33] Jonas, "Biological Engineering," 161–62.

[34] The following argument is Søren Holm's. See his "A Life in the Shadow: One Reason Why We Should Not Clone Humans," *Cambridge Quarterly of Health Care Ethics* 7 (1998): 161–62 here 161, 162.

Note that this argument would no longer have any basis should the common public misunderstanding of the relationship between genes and psychology be overcome. Such a misunderstanding does seem to be common today,[35] but whether it should serve as the basis of an argument against cloning is dubious. To hold that "what matters is what parents (and the child herself) *believe* about the importance of genetics" when what they believe is false seems to give ignorance more respect than it deserves—further, to entrench it when instead it ought to be eliminated.[36] In any event, it might well be asked how much, if at all, public policy ought to respect public ignorance, and how resistant to elimination this ignorance must be in order to warrant respect. Perhaps these questions should be answered practically, case by case, rather than theoretically. But, one way or the other, the case for ignorance seems weak.

Is there, then, any other way to take Jonas's reflections? If not, we must concede that his critique rests on the fallacy of genetic determinism. I propose that the way to go is to focus, not on the issue of foreknowledge, but on what Jonas calls the "idea" of cloning, which is to say what directs "the cloning proposition," what would be its perfection, though it might be impossible ever to realize fully.[37] The "idea" of cloning—or at least the "idea" of cloning a distinguished donor, say like Lenin—is to make possible what Jonas calls "repetition of life performance" in one way or another. No parties to the cloning, parents or child, need believe in a crude genetic determinism. They could all very well understand that environmental factors matter plenty. But what matters for this critique is that the person knows that he has been given the body that he has with the idea that this body, with its particular genotype, gives warrant to the hope that he might have the stuff within him to reincarnate his progenitor's genius. And it is this idea that threatens to be, in Jonas's words, "tyrannical in effect."

[35] Jane Maienschein calls "the public reaction to cloning...a legacy of the Human Genome Project." See her *Whose View of Life? Embryos, Cloning, and Stem Cells* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 238.

[36] Davis, *Genetic Dilemmas*, 121. Davis here is defending Jonas against Brock: "against Brock," she writes, "Jonas's point is well-taken—what matters is...," etc.

[37] Jonas again employs a Kantian vocabulary, here Platonic in origin. See *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, 348–54, A312/B368–A320/B377; English trans., *Critique of Pure Reason*, 309–14.

The young Lenin has been in the wings for some while now. Surely it is absurd to think that he would resuscitate for us the Lenin we once knew and loved, like Lazarus raised from the dead. But who would want to be the young Lenin? Would the young Lenin himself? I suppose we can imagine that he might revel in the role; it is at least a possibility. Or he might turn his back on it without a second thought. But there is a third possibility. He might be tyrannized by the idea that he has been brought into being to reincarnate his progenitor's genius. The very act of cloning a distinguished donor as such—that is, qua distinguished donor—embodies this intention. Whether his creators might someday renounce all expectations for him is irrelevant. The young Lenin is charged to repeat in some significant way after his progenitor, and his creators have inscribed this charge in his body. His future is not supposed to be his own to shape. He is supposed to become somebody who already was. He is not supposed to discover himself for himself. He is not supposed to be free to be a surprise to himself. In a sense, he is not supposed to be his *own* person. Instead, strange to say, he is supposed to become in one way or another a once and future person. Ironically, given his progenitor, the young Lenin would seem to be at risk of a radical form of alienation: from his very self, and indeed from his very own body.

Drawing on Helmuth Plessner's philosophical anthropology,[38] Jürgen Habermas has developed this point in his reflections on how manipulating the genetic makeup of a person before his or her birth might affect this person's self-understanding. Habermas's reflections extend Jonas's by drawing attention to our bodies. Habermas asks us to imagine how manipulating the genetic makeup of a person before his or her birth might affect "what we take as self-evident: that we exist as a body or,

[38] In Plessner's terms, we exist at once *as* bodies and *in* bodies. These two orders of experience impose themselves upon us ineluctably. My body is at once "the absolute focal reference of all things" in my environment *and* one thing among others in which I am mysteriously located, while yet standing somehow over and against it. In brief, human bodily existence imposes upon us the duality of *being* bodies and *having* bodies. See Helmuth Plessner, *Lachen und Weinen: Eine Untersuchung nach den Grenzen menschlichen Verhaltens* in *Ausdruck und menschliche Natur*, vol. 7 of *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Günter Dux, Odo Marquard, and Elisabeth Ströker, et al. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1982), 240; English trans., *Laughing and Crying: A Study of the Limits of Human Behavior*, trans. James Spencer Churchill and Marjorie Grene (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 36. Note that Plessner purports to be *describing* our experience, not making a case for a metaphysical dualism.

in a sense, 'are' our body."[39] How, in other words, might the person's relation to her body be affected by the knowledge that her body was eugenically programmed? Habermas allows the possibility the person might make "the [initially] 'alien' intention" her own, yet observes that "we cannot rule out the possibility of *dissonant cases*" inasmuch as "a harmonization between one's own and alien intentions" cannot be guaranteed.[40] In this case, the adolescent's parents will have gone a step further than the most controlling parents we have known to date. They will have gotten their expectations for her not only "into her head," so to speak, but through her genes into her very body. Or so, at least, her parents intended to do in making her as they did, whatever the extent of genetic determinism (which, to repeat, is a moot question). Now, we can imagine, *her body mutely repeats to her those parental expectations.*

In Habermas's judgment, "Irrespective of how far genetic programming could actually go in fixing properties, dispositions, and skills and in determining the behavior of the future person," *post-factum* knowledge of the circumstances of her "production" might induce in her a feeling of alienation from herself.[41] The risk is that she might not feel "at home, so to speak, in her own body" and so not at one with herself.[42] Could we imagine, instead, that she might feel herself imprisoned by her own body, and in a way that even the philosophical tradition has not foreseen? Could her *own* body feel alien to her—as somehow also *not* her own? If a person experiences her body as manufactured or produced, she may resent her parents who not only had her but made her, but she may also resent her body itself as incarnating alien intentions. We could perhaps imagine her saying to her parents, "You didn't let me be my own person!" rather than the more familiar, "You won't let me be my own person!" But what is even stranger is the possibility that she could direct the more familiar accusation, "You won't let me be my own person!" at her own body, as if she were divided against herself,

[39] Jürgen Habermas, *Die Zukunft der menschlichen Natur: Auf dem Weg zu einer liberalen Eugenik?* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2002), 77; English trans., *The Future of Human Nature*, trans. William Rehg, Max Pensky, and Hella Beister (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), 42.

[40] Habermas, *Die Zukunft der menschlichen Natur*, 105, 106; English trans., *The Future of Human Nature*, 61.

[41] Habermas, *Die Zukunft der menschlichen Natur*, 94; English trans., *The Future of Human Nature*, 53.

[42] Habermas, *Die Zukunft der menschlichen Natur*, 100; English trans., *The Future of Human Nature*, 57.

as if the body that was given to her stood in the way of her bodying forth who she wants to be.

We can imagine the clone, say our young Lenin, suffering the same fate. (Or imagine if you will a young Einstein, or Marilyn Monroe, or Elvis. Imagine being the clone of somebody whose body has become iconic. It seems that it could be worse to be the clone of some distinguished donors than of others.) The young Lenin's body would likely to some extent resemble that of Lenin himself. In any event, it would have within it, to one extent or another, the same stuff that Lenin was made of. As such, it would or at least could well remind the clone, even if his creators did not, of the once and future person he is supposed to become. Moreover, even if his creators renounced all expectations for him, the intention embodied by the act of cloning him would remain. Should he want to shape and lead his own life, free of this idea, his body would or at least could work against him. If, as Wittgenstein remarked, "the human body is the best picture of the human soul,"[43] the clone's body could present a disabling challenge to the development of her *own* soul, or in other words to her leading her *own* bodily life. Inasmuch as both genetic engineering and cloning seek "to transform the body... into a source of direction and development for a person's life," they seek to substitute "a developed genetic code for the serendipity of the soul."[44] In other words, they seek to steal the soul in advance. Perhaps the clone would feel as if she were living inside another person's body. Or perhaps, somewhat like the ancient Gnostics, she would feel herself at war with matter. Perhaps cloning would make a person for whom Gnosticism is true.[45] Who would choose such a fate? Or, more to the point, how could inflicting it on somebody ever be justified?

Jonas pleads for the recognition of what he calls a "right to ignorance" as "a condition for the possibility of authentic action." More precisely, "the ethical command" here, he writes, is "*to respect the right of*

[43] Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, pt. 2, 178.

[44] Harold W. Baillie, "Aristotle and Genetic Engineering," in *Is Human Nature Obsolete? Genetics, Bioengineering, and the Future of the Human Condition*, ed. Harold W. Baillie and Timothy K. Casey (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 209–32, here 223. For Aristotle, as Baillie notes, the soul is the life of the body, its first *entelechia*.

[45] Professor Philip Devine of Providence College suggested this phrase to me. For the dualism of Gnostic thought, see Jonas's "Gnosticism, Existentialism, and Nihilism," published among other places as the epilogue to *The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity*, 3rd ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001), 320–40.

each human life to find its own way and be a surprise to itself."[46] In the bioethics literature, this right is often assimilated to what Joel Feinberg has called "the child's right to an open future." Feinberg argues that a child's autonomy rights—whether derived from "the good of self-fulfillment" or considered "as morally basic as the good of self-fulfillment"—must "be *saved* for the child until he is an adult."[47] Based on the premises of classical liberalism, the state has an obligation to ensure that the child's life prospects are not unduly restricted while he is still in tutelage.[48] The challenge, obviously, is discerning whether a particular practice unduly restricts a child's life prospects. By Jonas's lights, cloning would.[49]

Given, however, my revision of Jonas's critique, the plea to preserve the clone's "open future" seems misleading. The claim that "the clone knows (or believes to know) altogether too much about himself" in the sense of his future psychology and personality rings too much of genetic determinism. But we can nevertheless reasonably ask whether the clone's right to self-determination might not be violated. Consider again what the experience would be like, or at least might be like, of a person who feels imprisoned by a body somehow not her own—more dramatically, a body that mutely repeats to her alien expectations. Yes, she would be as metaphysically free as any of us—we are not the

[46] Jonas, "Biological Engineering," 163.

[47] Joel Feinberg, "The Child's Right to an Open Future," in *Freedom and Fulfillment: Philosophical Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 76–77, 91–92.

[48] Compare John Locke's classic account of "paternal power" in his *Second Treatise of Government*, ed. C. B. Macpherson (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1980), ch. 6, §§52–76, 30–42.

[49] It should be noted that Jonas intended to ground his bioethics in his metaphysics of nature and conception of the place and import of human life in the cosmos, principally presented in *The Phenomenon of Life: Toward a Philosophical Biology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966). Discussions of Jonas's "Biological Engineering" in the bioethics literature ignore these far-reaching considerations. Jonas was not satisfied with invoking liberal principles to justify his thinking; he felt that liberal principles—in contemporary bioethics: beneficence, nonmaleficence, autonomy, and justice—could no longer be taken for granted and had to be justified by reference to more than the well-considered convictions of historical communities, to use Rawlsian language. In Jonas's words, he saw a need for "an ontological grounding for an ethics for the future," which he worked toward developing in both his book, *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), and in his article "Toward an Ontological Grounding for an Ethics for the Future," collected in his *Morality and Mortality: A Search for the Good after Auschwitz*, ed. Lawrence Vogel (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 99–112. I am skeptical, however, that Jonas's metaphysics is of much use in thinking about the ethics of cloning. It might lead us to be wary of cloning, but it does not tell us whether we would be right or wrong to be wary.

slaves of our genes—but the question is whether she would be able *to free herself* from the expectations inscribed in her body. Might her sense that she is able to live a life of her own be vitiated by her feeling that her body is not her own? Perhaps we should say, not that she would know altogether too much about herself, but that she would know altogether too much about her body and its potentialities. Whether *her* body, that is, her genotype in *this* iteration, would in fact have these potentialities would be a moot question. But the upshot is that it could also be a live question for her. She would know altogether too much about what a person *with her body, with its genotype*, could do; perhaps we could say, in brief, that she would know altogether too much about what her body could do. What it would be like to live with this knowledge needs fleshing out, which is the work of imagination, and then further reflection, which is the work of philosophy.[50] But to close this discussion for now: we have come to appreciate more and more over the last century how precarious an achievement autonomy is. How much more so might it be for a clone?

2. *Criticisms*

I want to consider several objections to this critique of cloning, a critique that is not quite Jonas's, but derived from his. Count as **objection 1** the claim that my critique, like Jonas's, rests on the fallacy of genetic determinism. (See the appendix.) I have already replied to this objection at length, so I begin here with objection 2.

[50] Against the background of a "Whiteheadian" metaphysics, the philosopher Frederick Ferré has argued that worry about cloning is misguided. The "true follower" of Jonas, Ferré claims, should realize that the likelihood of human reproductive cloning calls for, not better arguments against cloning, but "better metaphysical education" so that clones will indeed be able to live freely once they are among us. See Ferré's comments in this volume on my article and further his 1997 paper "On Replicating Persons: Ethics and the Technology of Cloning," available online at www.phil.uga.edu/faculty/ferre/CLONE.htm. By way of response, I agree with Ferré that we should think about how to behave toward clones once they are among us, but I disagree with him that we should stop thinking about the ethics of cloning. I also disagree with him that "better metaphysical education" is the solution. In my view, Ferré's metaphysical solution flies too high above the problem. For Ferré, it seems that a person's lived experience is a function of that person's metaphysics, and that metaphysics has the power to penetrate and transform the deepest and darkest recesses of the psyche. I am not so sure.

Objection 2: This objection, which is easy to anticipate, holds that the claim that cloning will injure a child is "merely speculative." For example, the lawyer Richard Epstein asks, "Who can confidently predict the psychological response, positive or negative, of the cloned person?" Observing that "the usual legal standard [to prohibit a practice] requires clear evidence of serious harm, at the least," he remarks further that "here we do not come close to meeting it." His advice is accordingly to "see what happens"; then "we could form our judgment with greater knowledge."[51] John Robertson allows that "such a situation is likely to be highly fraught psychologically, but there is no reason," he claims, "to think that it will invariably lead to bad outcomes."[52] Instead, "we can only speculate."[53]

It must be conceded that the preceding account of the situation of the clone is speculative, and more or less as Kant used this term: "Theoretical knowledge is speculative if it concerns an object... which cannot be reached in any experience."[54] Perhaps in the future clones will be able to tell us what being a clone is like, but, for now, whatever we say about this experience cannot be confirmed by experience. Again in Kantian terms, whatever we say will then be "empty"—it will lack the fulfillment that only experience can bring—but it need not be "blind": even Kant allowed that "exercise[s] of the imagination in the company of reason" may provide insight so long as there is some likeness between ourselves and the object of our speculation.[55] Jonas goes further in claiming that "transempirical certainty" is possible on the basis of consideration of "the single, unspecified case X"; but I think we must say that a clone *might well* be injured, not that he or she will inevitably be.

[51] Richard A. Epstein, "A Rush to Caution: Cloning Human Beings," in Nussbaum and Sunstein, eds., *Clones and Clones*, 262–79, here 271–73.

[52] John A. Robertson, "Human Cloning: Public Policy When Cloning Is Safe and Effective," in McKinnon, ed., *Human Cloning*, 132–52, here 137.

[53] John A. Robertson, *Children of Choice: Freedom and the New Reproductive Technologies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 168. See also Brock, "Cloning Human Beings," 156.

[54] Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, 599, A634/B662–A635/B663; English trans., *Critique of Pure Reason*, 527.

[55] Kant, "Mutmaßlicher Anfang der Menschengeschichte," in vol. 4 of his *Werke, Schriften von 1783–1788*, ed. Artur Buchenau and Ernst Cassirer (Berlin: Bruno Cassirer, 1922), 327–42, here 327; English trans., "Speculative Beginning of Human History" in *Perpetual Peace and Other Essays*, trans. Ted Humphrey (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983), 49–60 here 49.

There are then two further questions to ask. The first is whether it would be *reasonable* for the clone to feel imprisoned by her own body and to suffer in the ways that we have imagined. Or should the clone simply move on with her life and put all this drama behind her? That is, would we be warranted in expecting the clone to do so? After all, at least in a sense, her body is *not* somebody else's, and her life is in fact her own to live. The second question is whether we have any right to go forth with the experiment, which it should not be forgotten is an experiment on a human being whose consent is unavailable and cannot be assumed. In this regard, both Epstein's observation that we do not come close here to meeting "the usual legal standard" and his advice that we ought then "to see what happens" before forming our judgment seem lacking. First, surely cloning is not a "usual" case. Second, given that what is at stake is a human life, should we not try to look ahead? Again, it must be conceded that our only means of doing so is speculation; but to rule out speculation here is to ensure that ethics will come too late.

Despite these points, the answer to the second question—whether we have any right—depends in the end on the answer to the first—whether it would be *reasonable* for the clone to suffer. It is difficult to know how to answer this question—can we be sure one way or the other?—but perhaps this very uncertainty, if it is resistant to further reflection, is reason enough to say that going forth with the experiment would be *unreasonable*. It would be important to hear from psychologists on this question. They too could only speculate, but based on clinical experience with whatever cases might be analogous.

Objection 3: This objection begins by conceding that the prospect of injury or harm is at least credible. But then it is asked whether this injury or harm is either so grave or so unprecedented. According to Brock, "Most possible harms to a cloned child are less serious than genetic harms with which parents can now permit their offspring to be conceived or born."[56] Harris observes that poverty is an accurate predictor of bad outcomes for children, yet "it is quite another matter... to say that the poor should not be permitted to have children."[57] So if parents are free to conceive and carry to term a severely disabled fetus, and if the severely impoverished are free to have children, what could

[56] See Brock, "Cloning Human Beings," 145.
[57] Harris, *On Cloning*, 74. See also 84–85.

justify prohibiting cloning? To take matters yet further, we might wonder whether my case *against* cloning could not be redeployed, contrary to my intentions, as a case *for* an authoritarian eugenics, for example, forbidding mothers from carrying to term severely disabled fetuses, or the severely impoverished from procreating. Could it not be argued that a severely disabled or impoverished person would be prevented from, or at least confronted with great obstacles to, leading her own life? And that, for this reason, such a person should not be brought into the world?

Brock's and Harris's arguments here are examples of what has been called the "argument from precedent," specifically "the *we've already done it (and everything's been okay) argument.*" This argument takes the following form: "if practice X has been morally acceptable in the past, and if practice Y is just like practice X, then practice Y should be morally acceptable now and in the future." Yet whether practice Y is "just like" practice X often needs greater scrutiny.[58] Here we need to scrutinize whether cloning really would be just like allowing the severely disabled or impoverished to be born. The crucial question in this regard is whether the injury or harm to be suffered by the clone would be just like that suffered by a severely disabled or impoverished person. It seems not: there seems to be a significant difference between the situation of the clone and that of a severely disabled or impoverished person. If so, my case against cloning *cannot* in fact be redeployed as a case for an authoritarian eugenics.

The difference is that the severely disabled or impoverished person does not have to vie with alien intentions incarnated in her own body, as the clone might. Unlike the clone, the severely disabled or impoverished person is not similarly at risk of alienation from her very body, a form of alienation more radical than any that Marx criticized. We can also distinguish here from the case of a child brought into the world for a particular purpose, say to perpetuate the royal line.[59] Is not this child, like so many children, brought into being with a determinate "idea" in mind? The situation of the clone is similar, but finally not all that similar. The child brought into being in order to perpetuate the

[58] See Erik Parens, "Should We Hold the (Germ) Line?," *Journal of Law, Medicine and Ethics* 23 (1995): 173–76, here 173. See also his "Is Better Always Good?," in *Enhancing Human Traits: Ethical and Social Implications*, ed. Erik Parens (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1998), 1–28, here 12–14.
[59] See Harris, *On Cloning*, 88–89.

royal line is indeed charged to become, say, king. Further, his future, at least in this one respect, is not supposed to be his own to shape. So his situation is comparable to the clone's. Yet, unlike the case of the clone, it is *not* the case that this child is supposed to become somebody who already was. It is *not* the case that he is supposed to become in one way or another a once and future person. Instead, he is free to discover *who* he is, just not *what* he is to be. The difference is surely significant. Indeed, it seems that allowing him the freedom to discover *who* he is also opens the way to his deciding for himself *what* he wants to become.

Objection 4: Harris builds on the preceding objection. "Unless," he writes, "the child's condition and circumstances can be predicted to be so bad that it would not have a worthwhile life, a life worth living, then it will always be *in that child's interests* to be brought into being."[60] Relevant to cloning, there are two points to be made here. First, upon what assurance are we to say that the clone would or would not "have a worthwhile life, a life worth living"? Are we well-positioned to make this judgment? If there is any substantial question about the clone's quality of life, then it seems that even Harris would agree that we should not proceed with cloning. Second, Harris is simply speaking nonsense in the above sentence. It makes no sense to say that "it will always be *in that child's interests* to be brought into being" before *that* child has been brought into being. Before then, *that* child has no interests since *that* child does not exist.

Harris does talk sense, however, when he claims that, "whenever that child's life, despite any predictable sub-optimality, will be thoroughly worth living, then it cannot be that child's interests which justify any decisions or regulations which would deny it opportunities for existence."[61] Harris's point here is that it makes no sense to appeal to a projected child's interests in order to deny the child existence when we can confidently predict that existence, though sub-optimal, would be in its interests. This point, I think, must be conceded. But it is not decisive. As Harris himself allows, bringing a child into being in poor circumstances, yet not so poor that the child will be deprived of a worthwhile life, is still open to moral challenge, though it would be illogical to appeal to the projected child's interests in order to deny

[60] Ibid., 70.
[61] Ibid., 76–77.

the child existence.[62] Cases of so-called wrongful disability call for the articulation of "non-person-affecting" principles (or, "person-independent principles"): principles that make demands on would-be parents, and so provide arguments against conception without appealing to the interests of the projected child.[63] It is a good question, however, whether arguments against cases of wrongful disability can be made on liberal grounds. The liberal moral or political philosopher is interested in safeguarding the freedom of the individual to lead a life of his or her own devising. Supposing, then, that a person born in such a case would not be incapacitated to lead a life of his own—supposing, that is, that his disability would present only a challenge to him, not an insuperable obstacle—what grounds does a liberal moral or political philosopher have to protest this person's coming into being?[64]

Objection 5: The last objection to consider is one that I anticipated already toward the very beginning of this paper, namely, that Jonas's critique does not apply to all cases of cloning to produce children, but only to cases where the act of cloning is motivated by a desire to replicate an outstanding individual (or, in the language that I have since used, where the "idea" of cloning is to make possible repetition of life performance in one way or another). To recall, Jonas claims that the case of the clone of a distinguished donor "serves to bring into sharper light what would apply to all cases, i.e., to the cloning proposition as such." The question is whether this claim is sustainable for either his critique or mine derived from his.

Several bioethicists have distinguished two types of human reproductive cloning in view of "two different kinds of motivations would-be parents might have for resorting to cloning."[65] On the one hand, there is cloning whose motivation is "duplicative"; on the other hand, cloning whose motivation is "logistical." Duplicative cloning seeks, as its name indicates, to make another of a given individual, whether a distinguished

[62] Ibid., 88.
[63] See Buchanan, Brock, Daniels, and Wikler, *From Chance to Choice*, 242–56.
[64] It might be answered, on utilitarian grounds, but these can be notoriously illiberal. Perhaps the liberal moral or political philosopher would have to claim further, as Habermas does in his critique of genetic engineering, that the liberal political order would be imperiled by permitting the practice in question.
[65] Davis, *Genetic Dilemmas*, 114. She follows here John A. Robertson, "Why Human Reproductive Cloning Should Not in All Cases Be Prohibited," *New York University Journal of Legislation and Public Policy* 4, no. 1 (2000–2001): 35–43, here 37. See also Philip Kitcher, *The Lives To Come: The Genetic Revolution and Human Possibilities* (New York: Touchstone, 1997), 336–38.

donor, dead or alive, or a deceased child. Cloning is logistical when it serves persons who for some reason are having trouble procreating with one another, or who cannot because they are the same sex, yet who want a child biologically related to them and only to them. According to Dena Davis, "The duplicative element of cloning is a side effect" here, since the would-be parents only want a child who is related in this way, and not the duplicate of any given individual.[66] Logistical cloning might serve, among others, infertile couples, couples at risk of severe genetic disease, gay couples, and single men and women (though in the case of a man cloning himself, because of mitochondrial genes, the child could be only genetically virtually identical).[67]

Davis claims that Jonas's critique "seems to leave room for [cloning for] logistical motivations."[68] At the end of his critique, Jonas mentions the possibility of "random cloning from the anonymous and insignificant," but asks rhetorically, "then, why cloning at all?"[69] Davis comments: "He does not see why anyone would wish to do it, but [today] we can easily imagine infertile or genetically compromised couples who use cloning" for logistical motivations. In other words, today we can answer his question.[70] Moreover, according to Davis, "if it is done in a thoughtful manner, there seems no reason to condemn cloning for these motivations." Thus, she does not think that "cloning of humans should be banned." Instead, it should be the responsibility of health

[66] Davis, *Genetic Dilemmas*, 115.

[67] See ibid., 114–15 (quoting President Clinton's National Bioethics Advisory Commission); Kitcher, *The Lives To Come*, 336; Harris, *On Cloning*, 31–33; and Silver, "Popular Cloning versus Scientific Cloning in Ethical Debates," 54, who reports to have received "a dozen seemingly sincere letters from both single women and lesbian couples who want to use cloning technology to have babies."

[68] Davis, *Genetic Dilemmas*, 119.

[69] Jonas, "Biological Engineering," 162.

[70] Compare Callahan, who remarks that "hardly anyone... came forward [in the 1960s and '70s] with comparable idiosyncratic scenarios and offered them as serious reasons to support human cloning." For "in those days... the relief of infertility, and complex procreative problems, simply did not demand the kind of attention or have the kind of political and advocacy support now present." The main reason for cloning was taken to be, in Kass's words, "eugenically cloning the beautiful and the brawny or the best and the brightest." Nowadays, Kass remarks, such talk has been "downplayed," though it can still be heard. See Callahan, "Cloning," 144; Leon R. Kass, "Cloning and the Posthuman Future," in idem, *Life, Liberty, and the Defense of Dignity: The Challenge for Bioethics* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2002), 141–73, here 146; and Langdon Winner, "Resistance Is Futile: The Posthuman Condition and Its Advocates," in *Is Human Nature Obsolete? Genetics, Bioengineering, and the Future of the Human Condition*, 385–411.

professionals "to refuse to offer cloning to couples who wish to employ it for reasons that appear likely to cause harm," that is, couples or persons whose motivation is of the duplicative sort.[71]

Let Jonas's critique be summarized by the claim that the clone would know (or would believe to know) altogether too much about herself in the sense of his future psychology and personality. As such, Jonas's critique does *not* appear vulnerable to the objection that it does not apply to all cases of cloning to produce children. The claim that the clone is deprived of an open future applies equally to cases of duplicative *and* logistical cloning. This claim, however, is strictly false. It depends upon the fallacy of genetic determinism.

Let my critique, derived from Jonas's, be summarized by the claim that the clone would know altogether too much about her body and its potentialities. As such, my critique *does* appear vulnerable to the objection that it does not apply to all cases of cloning to produce children, but only to cases where the act of cloning is motivated by a desire to replicate an outstanding individual. The clone produced for logistical motivations would not be charged with repeating the outstanding life performance of another. Accordingly, she would not have to vie with alien intentions incarnated in her own body. And so it seems that her body would not stand in the way of her bodying forth who she wants to be.

Two replies suggest themselves. First, would it really be the case that such a clone's body would not stand in the way of her bodying forth who she wants to be—that is, of her becoming her own person—should she know it to be genetically virtually identical to her "father's" (*mutatis mutandis* for her "mother's")? Davis remarks that couples unable to conceive might choose logistical cloning in order "to avoid problematic aspects of adoption."[72] But perhaps these couples should give more thought to potentially problematic aspects of logistical cloning. What should we make, for example, of cloning a distinguished donor for logistical motivations? Is only cloning the undistinguished unproblematic? And is it really? Second, a critic of logistical cloning might press the question of what is really behind the desire to clone for logistical motivations. Why, in other words, *must* the couple have a child biologically related to them and only to them? Might it not be because of an expectation

[71] Davis, *Genetic Dilemmas*, 119, 128.

[72] Ibid., 119.

that the child will develop in a particular way? If so, the distinction between duplicative cloning and logistical cloning breaks down.

Both these replies, however, seem answerable in turn. First, it might be claimed that what is needed for the clone produced for logistical motivations to feel free to become her own person is no more than decent parenting—which seems possible in cases of logistical cloning, risible in cases of duplicative cloning. (Here good parenting would seem to come too late.) We cannot ignore, however, the puzzling question of what difference the intentions of the "parents" should be understood to make. I wrote earlier that the very act of cloning a distinguished donor as such—that is, qua distinguished donor—embodies the intention that the clone reincarnate her donor. This claim seems correct; but, to ask again, what should we make of cloning a distinguished donor for logistical motivations? Here the act takes place in the context of a significantly different story and as such embodies different intentions. What these differences would or might mean for the clone is difficult to say; also to reiterate, when we begin to think about the situation of a clone, *we do not know our way about*—a point that bears repeating more than once. As for the critic's question of what is really behind the desire to clone for logistical motivations, the desire to have children can be peculiarly resistant to analysis, even opaque. It does seem credible, then, that a couple could want to have a child biologically related to them and only them without there being much more to say.

To conclude, let us ask whether Jonas can help us at all to make sense of the significance of cloning for logistical motivations. I think that the answer is yes. I have pointed out that Jonas asks us to attend to the "idea" of cloning. Duplicative cloning and logistical cloning seem to be directed by two very different ideas. The idea of logistical cloning is simply to make it possible for couples or persons to have a child biologically related to them and only them. Jonas criticizes the idea of what we may now call duplicative cloning as potentially "tyrannical in effect." What should we make of the idea of logistical cloning? It seems to rely for its appeal on the conviction that people should be able to have the children that they want. But *should* people be able to have the children that they want?

We need to be careful about the meaning of the phrase "the children that they want." Surely people who want children, yet are having trouble procreating, deserve compassion and at least a measure of help. Also, if they don't want to have children by artificial insemination by donor, or surrogacy, or adoption, they obviously should not be forced to do

so. It is another question, however, whether they have a right to have the *particular* children that they want, or in other words whether they should be able to determine *just how* their children turn out to be. In *Eisenstadt v. Baird*, having to do with the distribution of contraceptives to unmarried persons, the United States Supreme Court recognized "the right of the *individual*, married or single, to be free from unwanted government intrusion into matters so fundamentally affecting a person as the decision whether to bear or beget a child."[73] Some bioethicists want to stretch the freedom *whether* to reproduce into a freedom to choose *what kind* of child to reproduce. From this point of view, procreative liberty implies "the right to take actions to assure that offspring have the characteristics that make procreation desirable or meaningful for that individual."[74] But this extension seems dubious (though, admittedly, some methods of "trying" to have a child of a particular sex—say by timing intercourse with ovulation—resist legislative regulation).[75] Accordingly, the question of whether people should be able to have the children that they want, in the sense of specifying the characteristics or properties of those children, seems open in principle to democratic debate and regulation, not foreclosed by a zone of privacy.

An important question here is whether cloning to produce children, by introducing a new way of bringing children into the world, would also introduce a change for the worse in our attitude toward human life. Paul Ramsey raised a similar question in the early 1970s with respect to in vitro fertilization (IVF);[76] Gilbert Meilaender raised this question in the late 1990s with respect to cloning.[77] In Meilaender's words, "Clearly, procreation has to some extent become reproduction, making rather than doing." He is apparently thinking here of the development of IVF. "But whatever we think of that," he goes on, "surely human cloning would be a new and decisive turn on this road—far more emphatically a kind of production," leading us to view human life more and more as a product of our will and design.[78]

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[73] 405 U.S. 438, 453 (1972).
[74] Robertson, *Children of Choice*, 153.
[75] Whether these methods are morally objectionable or not is another question.
[76] Paul Ramsey, "Shall We 'Reproduce'?," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 220, no. 10 (June 5, 1972): 1346–50 and 220, no. 11 (June 12, 1972): 1480–85. See especially 1482.
[77] Gilbert Meilaender, "Human Cloning Would Violate the Dignity of Children," in McGee, ed., *The Human Cloning Debate*, 189–96. See especially 194–95.
[78] Ibid., 195.

We might wonder, and worry, where this road would take us. But there are other reasons to be wary of reproductive cloning, both logistical and duplicative, than that it might lead to a slippery slope toward other technological adventures—never the strongest argument anyway. We need to consider what virtues might be endangered if we could manufacture our children to our specifications and what vices might be encouraged.[79] More generally, we need to think about what might be called the conditions of possibility of human life: how human life must be, or more precisely what our biological constitution must be, for the "humanness" of human life—what makes human life "human" in the strong, moral sense with which we sometimes use this word—to be possible. The question in brief is what connection there is between our mortal frames and our moral lives, a question that Jonas would have recognized as one of his own.[80]

[79] See Michael J. Sandel, "The Case against Perfection," *The Atlantic Monthly* 293, no. 3 (April 2004): 51–62.

[80] See Jonas's "The Burden and Blessing of Mortality," in idem, *Morality and Morality*, 87–98.

APPENDIX

To prevent misunderstandings, I present a précis of my article's arguments. In scholastic style (as found in Aquinas's writings), my question might be put:

Whether cloning would constitute an injustice to the clone?

There are five objections. My article argues in one way or another against all these objections.

Objection 1: It seems that cloning would *not* constitute an injustice to the clone. For Jonas's critique rests on the fallacy of genetic determinism. It is true that there is a common public misunderstanding of the relationship between genetics and psychology, namely, that genes determine psychology and personality. But a misunderstanding should not serve as the basis of an argument against cloning.

Objection 2: Moreover, Jonas's critique, or any like it, is merely speculative. "Who can confidently predict the psychological response . . . of the cloned person . . .?"

Objection 3: "Most possible harms to a cloned child [seem] less serious than genetic harms with which parents can now permit their offspring to be conceived or born." In addition, poverty is an accurate predictor of bad outcomes for children, yet we surely do not want to say that the poor should not be permitted to have children. So if parents are free to conceive and carry to term a severely disabled fetus, and if the severely impoverished are free to have children, what could justify prohibiting cloning?

Objection 4: We can confidently predict that the clone's life, even if sub-optimal, would be a life worth living. It makes no sense to appeal to a projected child's interests in order to deny the child existence when we can confidently predict that the child's life would not be so poor as to be not worth living. So there is no logical argument against cloning.

Objection 5: Jonas focuses his critique on the situation of a clone of a "distinguished donor." Remarkably, he also claims that such a case "serves to bring into sharper light what would apply to all cases, [that is], to the cloning proposition as such." But there is no reason to condemn cloning for logistical motivations. Even if duplicative cloning could harm the clone, there is no reason to think that logistical cloning would. What is needed for the clone produced for logistical motivations to feel free to become her own person is no more than decent parenting.

Here my objections end, and I go on to present my own position and replies to the objections.

On the contrary, Jonas draws our attention to the "idea" of cloning, which is to say what directs "the cloning proposition," what would be its perfection, though it might be impossible ever to realize fully. He observes that the "idea" of cloning—or at least the "idea" of cloning a distinguished donor—is to make possible "repetition of life performance" in one way or another.

I answer that we should focus not on the issue of foreknowledge, but on what Jonas calls the "idea" of cloning. So my critique of human reproductive cloning is not quite Jonas's, but derived from his.

The clone is supposed to become somebody who already was. The very act of cloning a distinguished donor as such—that is, qua distinguished donor—embodies this intention. Whether his creators might someday renounce all expectations for him is irrelevant. The clone is charged to repeat in some significant way after her progenitor, and her creators have inscribed this charge in her body. The danger is that the clone might not feel "at home, so to speak, in her own body." Could we imagine, instead, that she might feel herself imprisoned by her own body? Could her *own* body feel alien to her—as somehow also *not* her own? If "the human body is the best picture of the human soul," the clone's body could present a disabling challenge to the development of her *own* soul, or in other words to her leading her *own* bodily life.

Reply to Objection 1: It must be conceded that the claim that the clone would know (or believe to know) altogether too much about himself rings too much of genetic determinism. But what matters for this critique is that the person knows that she has been given the body that she has with the idea that this body, with its particular genotype, gives warrant to the hope that she might have the stuff within her to reincarnate her progenitor's genius. Yes, she would be as metaphysically free as any of us, but the question is whether she would be able *to free herself* from the expectations inscribed in her body. Against this background, we need to consider whether her sense that she is able to live a life of her own might not be vitiated by her feeling that her body is not her own.

Reply to Objection 2: It must be conceded that the preceding account of the situation of the clone is speculative. But to rule out speculation here is to ensure that ethics will come too late. There are two questions to ask. The first is whether it would be *reasonable* for the clone to feel imprisoned by her own body and to suffer in the ways

that we have imagined. The second question is whether we have any right to go forth with the experiment, which it should not be forgotten is an experiment on a human being. If it would be *reasonable* for the clone to suffer, then the answer to the question of whether we have any right to go forth with the experiment must be no.

Reply to Objection 3: The crucial question here is whether the injury or harm to be suffered by the clone would be just like that suffered by a severely disabled or impoverished person. It seems not: unlike the clone, the severely disabled or impoverished person is not similarly at risk of alienation from her very body.

Reply to Objection 4: It must be conceded that it makes no sense to appeal to a projected child's interests in order to deny the child existence when we can confidently predict that the child's life would not be so poor as to be not worth living. But bringing a child into being in poor circumstances, yet not so poor that the child would be deprived of a worthwhile life, is still open to moral challenge. Cases of so-called wrongful disability call for the articulation of "non-person-affecting" principles: principles that make demands on would-be parents, and so provide arguments against conception without appealing to the interests of the projected child.

Reply to Objection 5: Let Jonas's critique be summarized by the claim that the clone would know (or believe to know) altogether too much about herself in the sense of her future psychology and personality. As such, Jonas's critique does *not* appear vulnerable to the objection that it does not apply to all cases of cloning to produce children. The claim that the clone is deprived of an open future applies equally to cases of duplicative *and* logistical cloning. This claim, however, is strictly false. It depends upon the fallacy of genetic determinism.

Let my critique, derived from Jonas's, be summarized by the claim that the clone would know altogether too much about her body and its potentialities. As such, my critique *does* appear vulnerable to the objection that it applies only to cases where the act of cloning is motivated by a desire to replicate an outstanding individual. The clone produced for logistical motivations would not be charged with repeating the outstanding life performance of another. Accordingly, she would not have to vie with alien intentions incarnated in her own body. And so it seems that her body would not stand in the way of her bodying forth who she wants to be.

There is more to say here. But let us ask whether Jonas can help us to make sense of the significance of cloning for logistical motivations.

Jonas asks us to attend to the "idea" of cloning. Duplicative cloning and logistical cloning seem to be directed by two very different ideas. The idea of logistical cloning is simply to make it possible for couples or persons to have the child that they want. But *should* people be able to have the children that they want? That is, should they be able to determine *just how* their children turn out to be?

We need to consider what virtues might be endangered if we could manufacture our children to our specifications and what vices might be encouraged. More generally, we need to give much more thought to the *natural background* of our ethical lives, or what we might also call the *rootedness* of much of what we value in our natural condition.

So my paper ends by calling for further thought.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

REASON AND FEELING IN HANS JONAS'S EXISTENTIAL BIOLOGY, ARNE NAESS'S DEEP ECOLOGY, AND SPINOZA'S *ETHICS*

Martin D. Yaffe

> People put their effort into saying what sort of thing the soul is, while they determine nothing further about the body that receives it, just as though, in the manner of the Pythagorean myths, any random soul were to be clothed in any random body. For while each body seems to have its own proper look and form, they talk as if one were to say that carpentry is transmigrated into flutes; but the art has to use tools and the soul has to use the body.[1]

I

My task is to elucidate Hans Jonas's existential biology[2] as it bears on contemporary environmental ethics and to compare it in passing with Arne Naess's "Deep Ecology."[3] This daunting task becomes somewhat manageable, or at least more neatly focused, in that both Jonas and Naess find corroboration for their views in Benedict Spinoza's *Ethics Demonstrated in a Geometrical Order* (1677).[4] As is well known, a hallmark

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[1] Aristotle, *On the Soul* 407b20ff., trans. Joe Sachs (Santa Fe, NM: Green Lion Press, 2001), 64.

[2] Hans Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life: Toward a Philosophical Biology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966; reprint. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982; reprint. with an introduction by Lawrence Vogel, Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2001).

[3] Arne Naess, *Ecology, Community, and Lifestyle: Outline of an Ecosophy*, trans. David Rothenberg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 27ff.

[4] Hans Jonas, "Spinoza and the Theory of Organism," in *Philosophical Essays: From Ancient Creed to Technological Man* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1974), 206–23. Also Hans Jonas, "Parallelism and Complementarity: The Psycho-Physical Problem in the Succession of Niels Bohr," in *The Philosophy of Baruch Spinoza*, ed. Richard Kennington (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1980), 121–30. See

of Spinoza's *Ethics* is its claim to provide a—or the—clear and distinct account of God and/or nature.

I begin with a few remarks about the philosophical merits and pitfalls of environmental ethics, with a view to Jonas's (and Naess's) work. Pursuant to these remarks, I examine how Jonas and Naess each appeal to Spinoza for support. Both see in Spinoza something of what each first came to see independently of Spinoza. For that reason, I limit myself, by and large, to looking at Spinoza as mapped onto terrain staked out beforehand by each of them, respectively. Eventually, I conclude by pointing out the pervasive difficulty that Jonas, as well as Naess, shares with Spinoza—namely, the problematic relation between "reason" and "feeling" (the terms I mention in my title).

II

Environmental ethics is, by its own lights, an "applied" discipline. It "applies" philosophy to the pressing ecological tasks of the day. It underwrites ecologists' front-line work—the biological preservation of species whose habitats are threatened by the environmentally deleterious side-effects of modern technology—by clarifying, justifying and encouraging that work before the public, especially the thoughtful public. Environmental ethics is the philosophical handmaid of scientific ecology.

Employing philosophy in the service of scientific ecology, however, is something like employing it in the service of revealed theology. It risks downsizing philosophical inquiry into mere apologetics. The philosopher's role is in danger of shrinking into that of erudite publicist, sophisticated talking head, technically articulate ideologue, or well-briefed advocate intent on formulating an academically passable case for this or that environmental policy. Such practices may be useful for what they are. But Jonas, for one, would call their practitioners (if that is *all* they are) "camp follower[s]" rather than philosophers properly speaking.[5] They are not independent explorers, open to the

in addition Jonas's passing (but illuminating) remarks on Spinoza in *The Phenomenon of Life*, 57, 61n., 62n., 63, 131, 133, 252. Arne Naess, *Spinoza and the Deep Ecology Movement* (Delft, Netherlands: Eburon, 1993).

[5] Hans Jonas, "Contemporary Problems in Ethics from a Jewish Perspective," in idem, *Philosophical Essays: From Ancient Creed to Technological Man* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1974) 168–82, here 168.

full range of theoretical and practical perplexities surrounding today's environmental emergencies.

Certainly Jonas's own philosophical life's work cannot be circumscribed within the confines of environmental ethics, however understood. Even so, his wide-ranging and penetrating argument on behalf of the pressing need for an existential biology nowadays expressly raises the pertinent issue of the scope and limits of philosophy itself as it faces the crises that beset modern life and engage contemporary thought, along with other, related issues that are—or ought to be—at the nerve-center of environmental ethics. Let me characterize this cluster of issues by a term Jonas uses as a chapter heading in *The Phenomenon of Life*: "The Practical Uses of Theory."[6] For a provisional explanation of this term, I will summarize the two main points he makes in that chapter, for they are the backdrop to my further discussion.

Briefly stated, the points are these. First, modern science—along with modern philosophy, its armchair companion—is no longer strictly theoretical, at least not in the manner of, say, Aristotle's physics or metaphysics, since modern science does not aim at merely contemplating nature, but at mastering it by means of progressively improving high technology. Second, modern science is indebted cosmologically to biblical theology, which "democratizes" nature by leveling hierarchical differences among species and instead viewing plants, animals, and humans alike as equally the handiwork of their divine creator. Combining these two points, we may say that the legacy of biblical theology has enabled modern philosophy or science, from its origins and ever since, to treat all of nature, including human nature, as equally open—or vulnerable (as Jonas emphasizes)—to scientifically guided manipulation in the interest of ongoing technological progress, and to set its sights—somewhat problematically (as Jonas also emphasizes)—by this new, practical-theoretical goal.

I have deliberately tried to state these points in Jonas's own formulation as much as possible, even though his formulation (to say nothing of the points themselves) may be deeply controversial. Richard Kennington, Jonas's most articulate student on the subject of modernity's philosophical origins, disagrees with Jonas concerning whether or how, say, Francis Bacon and René Descartes as the philosophical founders of modern science are indebted to biblical theology (rather than to an intra-philosophic critique of the pre-modern philosophical tradition as

[6] Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 188–210.

such).[7] And Leon R. Kass, Jonas's most celebrated informal student on the subject of bioethics, disagrees concerning whether the Bible's own implicit cosmology is necessarily "democratic" (rather than attentive, in its way, to irreducible differences and rank-order among species).[8] But let such disagreements come to the surface, if they must, in due course. Spinoza's presence in our subsequent discussion ought to remind us that questions concerning modernity's origins and the Bible are never far away.[9] Let me instead return to the issue I raised at the outset about the philosophical role of environmental ethics vis-à-vis scientific ecology, and ask why inquiring minds like Jonas (or thoughtful activists like Naess) might, in the light of that issue, be attracted to Spinoza's *Ethics*.

It is this. I have already said that scientific ecology aims at the preservation of living species whose habitats are endangered by the successes and by-products of modern technology and that, assuming (as I do) that Jonas is more or less correct, modern science departs from Aristotle just insofar it sets its sights and measures its accomplishments by those same successes of modern technology. The relevant implications are as follows. The philosophical founders of modern science set aside the hierarchical cosmology inherited from Aristotle, which had taken its bearings by the heterogeneity of species (i.e., they manifest variety of "looks" [εἴδη]; *species*] differentiating plants and animals and humans from one another), and held instead that all of nature could be shown to consist of homogeneous regularities ("laws of nature") and materials (Descartes's "extension"; Newton's "atoms"). It made no difference that the newly discovered laws of nature or the newly discerned

[7] Richard Kennington, *On Modern Origins: Essays in Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Pamela Kraus and Frank Hunt (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2004), 4ff., 43, 88, 120, 126–27, 130.

[8] Leon R. Kass, *The Hungry Soul: Eating and the Perfecting of Our Nature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 193–225, especially 199–207; anthologized in *Judaism and Environmental Ethics: A Reader*, ed. Martin D. Yaffe (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2001), 384–409, especially 386–93. Also, Leon R. Kass, *The Beginning of Wisdom: Reading Genesis* (New York: Free Press, 2003), 25–53. See, in general, idem, "Appreciating *The Phenomenon of Life*," *Hastings Center Report* 25 no. 7 (1995): 3–12.

[9] Spinoza's *Theologico-Political Treatise* (1670) is, after all, the philosophical founding document of both modern liberal democracy and modern liberal religion; see the interpretive essay in Spinoza, *Theologico-Political Treatise*, trans. Martin D. Yaffe, Focus Philosophical Library (Newburyport, MA: Pullins, 2004), 267ff. Kennington shows that the *Treatise* is also the intra-Spinozan starting point for understanding the *Ethics*; see his "Analytic and Synthetic Methods in Spinoza's *Ethics*," in *The Philosophy of Baruch Spinoza*, 293–318, reprinted in *On Modern Origins*, 205–28; and see Leo Strauss, *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1952), 142–201, especially 187–90.

materials composing natural things might be subliminal, i.e., beneath the threshold of unaided human observation, or counterintuitive, i.e., contrary to inherited common sense's acknowledgement of the manifest heterogeneities, so long as these laws and materials could be certified by controlled experiment and measured by fine-tuned equipment as needed. The manifest heterogeneities would then, it was thought, be revealed to be the mechanically generated product of underlying homogeneities. The "rules of nature" are the same as the "rules of mechanics," Descartes asserted,[10] with the implication that plants and animals, being mere assemblages of homogeneous components, could be disassembled, reassembled and even redesigned at will once the applicable rules were figured out. The overriding aim here was not so much the idle contemplation of nature, however satisfying this might be to the inquiring mind, but what we might call the vigilant stalking of nature—observing carefully, even microscopically, its routine movements so that we, the stalkers, might anticipate those movements with reasonable certainty and intervene in them wherever possible or necessary to suit our own, strictly human convenience. Science and human power coincide, Bacon pronounced famously: to observe nature properly is to empower ourselves to tame nature by exploiting its newly discovered laws and rearranging its newly discerned materials—in Bacon's words, to "conquer" nature "for the relief of man's estate";[11]

[10] I have quoted a familiar passage in Descartes's *Discourse on Method* V, ¶ 8. Jonas quotes Descartes's *Principles of Philosophy*, IV.203 ("I do not recognize any difference between the machines made by craftsmen and the diverse bodies put together by nature alone... all the rules of mechanics belong to nature, so that things which are artificial are thereby natural"), and comments *inter alia*: "But... from the fact of machines working by natural principles entirely it does not follow that they work by the entire natural principles, or, that nature has no other modes of operation than those which man can utilize in his constructions. But this very view of nature (not the innocent one of human mechanics) was Descartes's true conviction" (*The Phenomenon of Life*, 203, with 203 n. 5). See further, Kennington, *On Modern Origins*, 79–204.

[11] See Francis Bacon, *New Organon*, I.3 ("Human knowledge and human power come to the same thing, because ignorance of the cause frustrates effect. For *nature is conquered* only by obedience; and that which in thought is a cause, is like a rule in practice." [trans. L. Jardine and M. Silverthorne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 33; my italics]), with *The Advancement of Learning*, I.v.11 ("But the greatest error of all the rest [among the learned] is the mistaking or misplacing of the last or furthest end of knowledge: for men have entered into a desire of learning and knowledge, sometimes upon a natural curiosity and inquisitive appetite; sometimes to entertain their minds with variety and delight; sometimes for ornament and reputation; and sometimes to enable them to victory of wit and contradiction; and most times for lucre and profession; and seldom sincerely to give a true account of their gift of reason, to the benefit and use of men: as if there were sought in knowledge a couch whereupon to rest a

in Descartes's words, to "render ourselves as masters and owners of nature."[12] If we now fast-forward from the philosophical origins of the modern-scientific project—mastery of nature, as Jonas calls it—to our own time when the brilliant and cumulative successes of that project have been shadowed by the unfortunate environmental deterioration and threat to species' viability which are the concern of modern ecology, we may, like Jonas, begin to wonder whether the concomitant eclipse of Aristotelian science—which, to repeat, unlike modern science took its bearings by the manifest heterogeneity of species—has been altogether salutary, given that the new terms of the new science have tended to obscure just what it is which is meanwhile under threat.[13] This very wonderment, among others, seems to underlie *The Phenomenon of Life*, which Jonas describes in part as an attempt to restore, on the basis of modern (Darwinian) biology, something of Aristotle's neglected insights concerning the integrity and heterogeneity of existing life (including, of course, human life). While Jonas's wonderment is scarcely limited to the purview of environmental ethics, *The Phenomenon of Life* is nevertheless a service to environmental ethics insofar as it spells out the conditions under which its purview becomes plausible and desirable.

The same wonderment, or a somewhat more generalized version of it—namely, whether it is possible to conceptualize the integrity and heterogeneity of living species as such on the basis of modern science, which seems congenitally inhospitable to such conceptualization—underlies Jonas's inquiry into Spinoza as well.

III

Jonas praises Spinoza for his having articulated a "theory of organism" in express controversy with Cartesian dualism. To bring out what

searching and restless spirit; or a terrace for a wandering and variable mind to walk up and down with a fair prospect; or a tower of state for a proud mind to raise itself upon; or a fort or commanding ground for strife and contention; or a shop for profit or sale; and not a rich storehouse for the glory of the Creator and *the relief of man's estate*." [ed. G. W. Kitchin, intro. Jerry Weinberger (Philadelphia: Paul Dry Books, 2001), 33–34; my italics]). Jonas himself quotes comparable statements of Bacon's in the preface to *The Great Instauration* (*The Phenomenon of Life*, 189). Consider, further, Kennington, *On Modern Origins*, 1–77.

[12] Descartes, *Discourse on Method* VI, ¶ 2.

[13] See also Leon R. Kass, *Toward a More Natural Science: Biology and Human Affairs* (New York: Free Press, 1985), especially 249–75, 318–45.

Jonas has in mind here, I must first sketch the anti-Cartesian drift of his overall argument in *The Phenomenon of Life*. I will then retrace his narrower argument concerning the difference between mechanism and organism, as found in the chapter he calls "Is God a Mathematician?"[14] For expository purposes, I will reduce this chapter to five points—to which I will appeal immediately afterward as a checklist for his appreciation (and subsequent critique) of Spinoza.

Let me first state *The Phenomenon of Life*'s overall argument in a negative way. Jonas argues that a scientific worldview based on Cartesian dualism—on the split between mind and matter as found in Descartes's mathematical-mechanical physics and in subsequent philosophic-scientific thought—fails to come to terms with the plain facts of organic life. By Cartesian dualism, he means the view that there is an ontological gap between mechanically operating bodies, on the one hand, and minds that operate purposively and subsist independently of bodies, on the other. Bluntly stated, the difficulty he finds with Descartes's mind-body dualism is that it overlooks the difference between dead bodies and living ones. Descartes himself suggested that living bodies—especially animals—are nothing more than machines. But living bodies operate by means of metabolism; and metabolism is not quite the same as mechanism. Ingesting food, for example, is more than consuming fuel. Unlike mere fuel, food must assimilate and integrate into the organism for the latter to function at all. In contrast, if fuel were somehow to assimilate and integrate into, say, a mechanical engine, it would do so presumably as sludge that would corrode, clog and ultimately disable that engine. Such circumstances would hardly be good for that engine! Food, in contrast, is indispensable for organisms. The relation between food and organisms, then, has to be understood differently than the relation between fuel and machines.

Stated in a more positive way, Jonas's contention is that organic bodies, as metabolizing entities, must also share to some extent in mind. That is, even subhuman organisms have to be understood as selves that exercise a certain irreducible freedom. It follows that the freedom that Cartesians limit entirely to mind must instead permeate all levels of animate nature. Thus, on the most basic level, i.e., that of *plant* life, organisms, unlike machines, can (indeed must) choose what to metabolize and what to reject or eliminate in order to survive and flourish.

[14] Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 64–98.

And, on a somewhat higher level, i.e., that of *animal* life, organisms in addition pursue food and flee predators—namely, by crawling, walking, running, swimming or flying—and to that extent their motility, or freedom to relocate, is driven by perception and emotion (notably, the emotions of greed and fear). Finally, on a still higher level, i.e., that of *human* life, prehistoric cave-drawings indicate that even the most primitive human beings are aware of images, i.e., of objects they choose to focus on, separate out and preserve in abstraction from the transient particulars of this or that pursuit or flight; and, as their freely exercised image-making capacities evolve, they develop the capacity to generate an image of themselves as such—an "ideal" image of what it means to be or become a human being in the full sense of the term, or of what human beings *qua* evolving beings may reasonably emulate or aspire to as a species. Here Jonas consciously appeals to the biblical tradition in calling human beings' idealized self-image by the term "image of God" (Genesis 1:26f.)—meaning those respects in which human beings are or ought to be, by their own lights, like their divine creator.

To draw out the theological (and existential) implications of this last: if Jonas is correct, God could not possibly be a "mathematician" (as the celebrated mathematical physicist James Jeans, for one, claimed)[15] and still understand nature. Indeed, just to understand biological processes for what they are, God could not be a simple beholder of nature at all. Metabolism, Jonas argues, is not adequately grasped as the mere movement or change-of-position of bodies in space and time, even or especially when these changes are seen to follow a mathematical formula or pattern such as might describe the functioning of the component parts of a machine. We must in addition take into account the freedom—the combined choosing and vulnerability—integral to the organism's own felt selfhood. Such freedom can be known only existentially, by inward experience on the part of a self that is capable of sharing that freedom on its own—a self that in turn both chooses and (concomitantly) suffers, as human beings among others do. If God is not to be denied the possibility of understanding biological life, then God too must be thought of as a living self that is sensitive or receptive to the choices and sufferings peculiar to other living selves. If the concept of such a God is moreover to be consistent with Darwinian premises (as Jonas

[15] See James H. Jeans, *The Mysterious Universe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933), 122, with the remainder of my discussion of Jonas here.

insists it must), then the progressively evolving image of God—that is to say, the ever-evolving image that human beings as ongoing products of evolution have of their own ideal selves—must include at each moment the highest aspirations they can visualize themselves realizing at some foreseeable moment of their history. Such a God, or, if you will, such an evolving idealized self-image on the part of human beings, would then become ennobled with each historical self-ennoblement by human beings and suffer degradation with each corresponding self-degradation on the part of human beings. Ontologically speaking, then, God—like human beings themselves when viewed in a Darwinian mode—turns out to be not merely a *knower*, but also, as a precondition for his being a knower of living creatures in particular, a *sufferer*, whose moral successes and failures are inextricably tied to those of his human (and other) creatures. In short, Jonas's God is a suffering God who suffers existentially, both *with* and *for* fellow sufferers.

Now let me return from these theological heights to Jonas's (and afterwards Spinoza's) account of the basic phenomenon that distinguishes living from non-living beings: metabolism. In reducing Jonas's account to five principles, I will supply a handy subheading for each, for ease of retrieval during the Spinoza comparison to follow.

1. *Cosmology's Obligation to Account for Organic Life*

> If life is not within the competence of an alleged cosmic principle, though it is in every sense within the cosmos, than that principle is inadequate for the cosmos as well.[16]

Jonas's argument about whether God is or is not a mathematician is provoked by James Jeans's tendentious assertion in *The Mysterious Universe*, his popular book written in the 1930's: "From the intrinsic evidence of his creation, the Great Architect of the Universe now begins to appear as a pure mathematician."[17] Jonas downplays the inadvertent damage Jeans does to his own credibility by speaking as if the image of God *qua* architect contemplating a cosmic blueprint were something that only "now [*sic*] begins to appear...," i.e., by Jeans's betraying his obliviousness to the mathematical cosmologies of, say, Plato, Galileo,

[16] Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 65.
[17] Ibid., 64.

Descartes, or Leibniz, along with the world-historical fates of those cosmologies. Limiting himself to examining the simple truth or falsity of Jeans's claim, Jonas finds it open to, and in need of, the following test. When we view the cosmos as a grid or hologram of mathematically describable laws of nature, can we then account for the presence in that cosmos of living things (i.e., of metabolism)? If the answer to this question is yes, then Jeans's claim would tend to be vindicated. But if the answer is no, as Jonas himself argues, then Jeans's claim would turn out to be untenable, i.e., false. The price of holding onto that claim would then be one of the following. Either we would have to commit the absurdity of overlooking the existence of living things (a head-in-the-sand response that amounts to the peremptory demand that biology kowtow to a physics whose range of competence extends no further than "dead" matter); or else we would need to demonstrate beyond a reasonable doubt that living organisms are, at bottom, merely the mathematically measurable movements of lifeless matter (that is to say, we would need to show that, and how, metabolism collapses into mechanism).

In short, if Jeans is right, living things are not, in the final analysis, living. If Jonas is right, God is not, in the final analysis, (simply) a mathematician.

2. *Organism as Ongoing Process*

> The material parts of which the organism consists at a given instant are to the penetrating observer only temporary passing contents whose joint material identity does not coincide with the identity of the whole which they enter and leave, and which sustains its identity by the very act of foreign matter passing through its spatial system, the living form.[18]

To see what Jonas is getting at here, consider an x-ray or hologram image, consisting of a spread of dark spots and lines. Supposing for a moment that the image were merely a static, unmoving one, it would remind us of a children's connect-the-dot puzzle. In order to "see" what the dots-and-lines were dots-and-lines *of*, we would need to construct

[18] Ibid., 75–76.

or superimpose on that skeletal image the fleshed-out image of which the dots and lines supply only, or at best, the dimensions. In the case of the puzzle, this added requirement is especially clear, since as soon as we as children have begun to connect the dots one-by-one far enough to be able to anticipate the fleshed-out image by, say, an inkling or a flash of insight, the otherwise dreary task of continuing to connect the still-unconnected dots loses interest for us, and we would rather contemplate the finished product—which now makes the formerly random-looking dots-and-lines intelligible—or else go on impatiently to the next puzzle.

The point of the foregoing example is that the mathematical arrangement of the dots-and-lines does not as such tell us what those dots-and-lines are dots-and-lines *of*—whether something living or dead, for instance. We can only know what the dots-and-lines are dots-and-lines *of* by appealing, in the last analysis, to something besides the dots-and-lines per se.

This last is so even or especially when we shift to the example of a dynamic hologram consisting, say, of waves. These might be said to resemble the metabolism of a living organism in the following way. The metabolic feature of the organism has to do with its ongoing interchange of matter with its environment. As in a wave, so too here, there is nothing static. A particle of air or food is constantly in motion. It is ingested, assimilated into the bloodstream, circulated, and finally integrated with the living bodily cells—or, alternatively, excreted along with other particles that are useless to the organism or else used up by it. The difference between metabolism and wave-motion, however, remains. A particle's passage through a wave is guided by forces altogether external to, and independent of, that wave; the wave is a mere function of its environment—the wave's dynamics being inseparable from those of its environment. In other words, there is no rhyme or reason for a wave's being a wave except that it is the by-product of motions external to it and beyond its control; in themselves waves are random, pointless, without inherent purpose. In contrast, an organism's ingesting and excreting this or that particle is, precisely, *purposive*. The organism internalizes or rejects that particle, and others, in accord with its ongoing need for nourishment as an independent, self-subsisting thing. The organism, unlike the wave, is hardly the mere product of its environment—e.g., it is not just what it eats. Food itself is only *food* to some creature that wants it, i.e., that needs to eat. Otherwise it

is not exactly food, just some substance whose edible features—being otherwise unwanted—existed solely in the mind of the beholder (assuming, of course, that the beholder already knew what it means to eat!).

In short, food—and, correspondingly, life—shows up only in connection with something that has an interest in eating, i.e., only to a self-interested organism. But self-interest is, in turn, not something that shows up as such in an x-ray or hologram, to say nothing of a connect-the-dots puzzle.

3. *Organism as Self-Centered Individuality*

> The mathematical God in his homogeneous analytical view misses the decisive point – the point of life itself: its being self-centered individuality.[19]

Jonas goes on to argue that metabolism, on the one hand, and purposiveness in the form of self-interest, on the other, are inseparable. He does not deny that there are "aggregates" that are nothing more than the sum of their parts, as, for example, a stone or a drop of water is nothing more than the relatively persistent togetherness of its homogeneous materials. Stones are tantamount to highly compressed powder, and water is the same as extremely condensed vapor. Reducing these to their smallest components does not change what they are ontologically, i.e., in their inherent nature, but only phenomenally, i.e., to the naked eye of the beholder. In the case of a metabolizing organism, however, what holds the components together is neither the synthesizing power of the beholder, nor the concurrent pressures of the outside forces impinging on them. That is to say, what makes them what they are is not their mere stability in space or continuity in time. Each organism's existence depends in addition on its active self-integration of things other than itself—food, to mention only the most basic thing. Its inherent dependence on food means that it is paying ongoing attention to its own, continually pressing demands—the demands of hunger, thirst, respiration, etc.—such as are generated by an irrepressible neediness that characterizes it both as an instance of its species and as a unique individual. An organism's continued existence and flourishing are thus inseparable from its self-interest as a being that somehow knows both

[19] Ibid., 79.

that it needs to eat and *what* it needs to eat, as well as what it must do to acquire and ingest what it needs.

4. *Dialectic of Freedom and Necessity*

> Organic freedom . . . is balanced by a correlative necessity, which belongs to it as its own shadow and as such recurs intensified at each step to higher independence as the "shadow" peculiar to that level.[20]

It follows that an organism's identity can only be understood dialectically, in terms of what Jonas calls the "*needful freedom*" or forced choices that sustain its material components. Three implications follow, and serve to illustrate this point:

First, on the most basic level, that of metabolism as such, we see, on the one hand, the freedom that organisms exercise by being able to change the matter of which they are composed. Thus eating, drinking, inhaling, and excreting are, to begin with, the organism's purposive or selective exchange of its own matter with that of its environment. On the other hand, the organism is at the same time *forced* to exercise that freedom. Food, drink, breath, and excrement are necessities it cannot live without. To stop eating, drinking, breathing, or excreting would be to die, i.e., to cease to exist as that organism. A living organism is thus both free and unfree; it acts purposively and under compulsion at one and the same time. In Jonas's words, "This indigence, so foreign to the self-sufficiency of mere matter, is no less a distinction of life than is its power, of which it is but the other side: its liberty is its peculiar necessity. This is the antinomy of freedom at the roots of life and in its most elementary form, that of metabolism."[21]

Second, organisms both can and must interact with the outside world. An organism's ongoing need to assimilate new matter means that it is essentially open to things beyond itself. It is separate, yet not entirely separable, from an environment in which it cannot help taking a continual interest. It follows that the freedom that even the simplest organism necessarily exercises vis-à-vis what is other than itself is not merely nutritive. It is also cognitive—even if the "knowledge" that, say, plants have is sub-conceptual, or remains at the level of barely articulate

[20] Ibid., 83.
[21] Ibid., 84.

feeling. Yet what this means, in turn, is that there is a foothold in nature, in the very structure of organic life, for "higher" knowledge as well. Living is inseparable from knowing, even at the rudimentary level of mere metabolism.

Third, the give-and-take between an organism and its environment is irreducibly two-sided. The organism needs food, etc., which the environment obligingly supplies, while at the same time the environment solicits the organism's attention just by showcasing that particular edible item among its countless and various other inhabitants. Even so, the organism's success in acquiring that edible item for itself is not automatically guaranteed. Frustration is possible as well as satisfaction, and somehow the difference must be knowable and must count for something as far as the organism is concerned. In other words, organisms, even the most primitive ones, experience inwardness or subjectivity. The organism must choose, and its choices both make a difference and are known to make a difference to it. Organisms, in short, are not exactly atoms, or even sophisticated collections of atoms. If I may speak not entirely metaphorically, they are consumers. Subhuman though most of them may be, they nevertheless cannot help experiencing what may rightly be called consumer satisfaction and consumer frustration. They are, as has already been said, selves.

5. *Transcendence as Conscious Anticipation*

> By the "transcendence" of life, we mean its entertaining a horizon, or horizons, beyond its point-identity.[22]

"Transcendence" as Jonas understands it here means conscious anticipation on the part of the organism, such that its environment is not entirely opaque to it. Each organism, then, has a certain range of knowledge, however crude or inarticulate. It feels things around itself, discriminates among those things—if only according to what is useful to ingest, etc.—and responds to those things it has discriminated according to its expectations of them, one way or another. In Jonas's words, a living organism thus "fac[es] forward as well as outward"; its horizon—the range of its awareness—is temporal as well as spatial. "The internal direction toward the next impending phase of a being

[22] Ibid., 85.

that has to continue *itself*," Jonas adds, "constitutes biological time; the external direction toward the co-present not-itself which holds the stuff relevant to its continuation [*sc.*, food, etc.] constitutes biological space. As the here expands into the there, so the now expands into the future."[23]

Two consequences (or, rather, explications) follow:

First, from the point of view of the internal time-horizon of the self-concerned organism, concern with the future outstrips concern with the past. The past is relevant to it only insofar as its memories can be integrated with its anticipation of what will happen next. Organisms are, of necessity, predominantly future-oriented.

Second—and finally—then, what Jonas calls an "external linear time-pattern of antecedent and sequent, involving the causal dominance of the past" is "inadequate." A living organism is "essentially also what it is going to be and is becoming." Its purposiveness or self-concern, that is to say, is not the mere by-product of the sum of its component parts, and not merely built into it as a sort of afterthought or fortuitous result of its physical organization. It is the point of that organization, "as exemplified in the relation of organic parts to the whole and in the functional fitness of [the] organism generally."[24] Here form follows function. But neither the self-concern that guides the functioning of the organism, nor the dialectical constitution housed in the living form of the organism, shows up in the mind of Jeans's mathematically absorbed Great Architect of the universe. In light of the plain facts of metabolism to which Jonas calls our attention, Jeans's God turns out to be science fiction.

IV

Now let me proceed with my five-point checklist concerning Jonas's Spinoza by following the points as Jonas makes them in his "Spinoza and the Theory of Organism."

1. To show how Spinoza's system[25] accounts for metabolism in principle, Jonas begins by considering Spinoza's correction of Descartes's

[23] Ibid., 85–86.
[24] Ibid., 86.
[25] Jonas (along with conventional Spinoza scholarship nowadays) uses this term freely to describe the content of the *Ethics*, even though strictly speaking it is not a

dualism. Descartes understood body and mind to be two separate substances that interact only in the case of human beings.[26] Even then, Descartes could not account for their interaction satisfactorily.[27] Spinoza argues instead that there is only one substance. He calls it, equivalently, God or nature. Individual things in the empirical meaning of the term—plants, animals, humans, etc.—are thus mere "affections" or modifications of God or nature as a whole. Differently stated: according to Spinoza, substance *qua* one all-inclusive thing is infinite. It can therefore never be known as such by us except in some "mode," that is to say, from some one-sided perspective or frame of reference. Although an infinite number of modes characterize the one substance as such, our own cognitive access to it is necessarily limited to two modes: extension and thought.[28] These terms are obviously of Cartesian provenance. But *contra* Descartes, they no longer refer to two different things: they are instead two complementary aspects of the same thing. This consequence gives a whole new meaning to the mind-body relation. "Act of will" and "movement of body" are now, ontologically speaking, identical. "Thus," Jonas remarks, "the riddle created by Cartesian dualism—of how an act of will can move a limb, since the limb as part of the extended world

term that Spinoza himself uses in or about the *Ethics*—or at all. There is no listing for it, for example, in Emilia Giancotti Boscherini's authoritative *Lexicon Spinozanum* (2 vols.; The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970). (In contrast, Leibniz will speak in his *Theodicy* of "my system" [trans. E. M. Huggard (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1985), 69].) Elsewhere Jonas rightly suggests that Spinoza is perfectly able to separate the *Ethics*' "geometrical" manner of arguing from its logically cogent demonstrations as such, i.e., that as Spinoza himself understands what he is saying in the *Ethics*, these two features of his book—the deliberate "systematic" appearance and the actual "systematic" argument—are not coextensive. Consider Jonas's apt remark concerning the "counterexperiential" character of *Ethics* III, Prop. 2 ("The body cannot determine the mind to thought, neither can the mind determine the body to motion nor rest, nor to anything else, if there be anything else"): "With Spinoza this was, ostensibly, a proposition subject to demonstration (duly supplied) from first truths. But in reality it was postulative, and the 'first truths' were conceived with a view to it" (Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 61, n. 4) On this whole theme, see Kennington, "Analytic and Synthetic Methods in Spinoza's *Ethics*" (above, n. 9).

[26] Animals, to recall, were said to be machines.

[27] See Spinoza, *Ethics* V, Preface. In what follows, translations of Spinoza are my own except where noted otherwise. I use the text found in Spinoza, *Opera*, ed. Carl Gebhart (4 vols.; Heidelberg: Carl Winters Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1925), 2:43–308.

[28] These are "necessary... not because our subjective cognition happens to be cast in that mold, but objectively inherent in substance itself as articulations of its plenitude.... They are the two universal forms under which alone we can and must conceive all things" (Jonas, "Parallelism and Complementarity," 122).

can only be moved by another body's imparting its antecedent motion to it—this riddle disappears."[29] Living—that is to say, metabolizing—bodies, i.e., bodies that exchange components constantly and more or less consciously (*sic*) with other bodies, become ontologically possible.

2. To show how Spinoza accounts for organisms as ongoing processes, Jonas observes that, with his correction of Descartes's dualism, Spinoza no longer needs to construe the changes undergone by "complex material entities," including organisms, mechanically. Their identity is sufficiently established by the "configuration" (or "determinateness of arrangement") that governs their constantly changing materials.[30] The advantage over Cartesianism here is that Spinoza can account for the identity of a material thing despite—or, rather, throughout—its ongoing exchange of materials with other material things (as in eating, drinking, breathing, excreting). Jonas refers us to the so-called "Physical Digression" in *Ethics* II (the seven lemmas and their accompanying postulates, etc., following Proposition 13).[31] Lemma 1 conceives differences among bodies solely by computing the motion-and-rest and quickness-and-slowness of their constantly changing materials mathematically (geometrically). Lemmas 4–7 go on to account for metabolism, growth, movement of limbs, and locomotion accordingly:

> Lemma 4 speaks of an individual body's retaining its *identity throughout the ongoing replacement of its ongoing materials* (metabolism), so long as the nature and number of those materials stay the same;
>
> Lemma 5 speaks of an individual body's retaining its *identity throughout the enlargement of its ongoing materials* (growth), so long as the nature and reciprocal behavior of those materials stay the same;
>
> Likewise, Lemma 6 speaks of an individual body's retaining its *identity throughout the change-of-direction of the movements of some of its component materials* (movement of limbs), so long as the nature and reciprocal behavior of those materials stay the same otherwise;

[29] Jonas, "Spinoza and the Theory of Organism," 210; see also idem, "Parallelism and Complementarity," 123.

[30] Jonas, "Spinoza and the Theory of Organism," 210–11.

[31] See David Lachterman, "The Physics of Spinoza's *Ethics*," in *Spinoza: New Perspectives*, ed. Robert W. Shahan and J. I. Biro (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), 71–112.

> Finally, Lemma 7 speaks of an individual body's retaining its *identity throughout the starts-and-stops of changes-of-direction of its motion as a whole* (locomotion), so long as the nature and reciprocal behavior of those materials also stay the same otherwise.

Although these lemmas thereby account for the identity of complex bodies (including organisms but not only them) as ongoing processes, I must wait for the next item on my checklist to comment on how they account for the *self*-identity peculiar to organisms as well.

3. Spinoza conceives the link between an individual organism *qua* body (or "extension") and that same organism *qua* mind (or "thought") in terms of a strict psycho-physical parallelism.[32] The mind of each consists entirely in the awareness of its own body.[33] To each and every "idea" there corresponds, as its "ideate" (or object), a bodily event. This, as we have already seen from the "Physical Digression," is nothing but the mathematically traceable configuration of movement-and-rest, speed-and-slowness, which characterizes that particular body. Needless to say, "ideas" are therefore not the same as copies of the bodily events to which they correspond. They show up rather as floating images, appetites, and emotions in a stream of consciousness. We might think of these simply as the individual organism's responses *qua* mind to the stimuli supplied by the mathematically configured movements which it undergoes *qua* body. *Understanding* how the images, etc., are connected with these movements and their mathematical configurations, however, is not something immediately given to that organism along with the bodily stimuli, but a subsequent achievement on the part of its mind—provided, of course, that it is a human mind. Ultimately, only a mind that can look past or hold in abeyance its bodily-induced images, appetites, emotions, etc., so as to correlate those images, etc., to the corresponding bodily movements—that is to say, a mind trained into shape by Spinoza's larger argument in the *Ethics* (or, conceivably, independently, as Spinoza presumably trained himself)—will then come

[32] Jonas cites, in general, *Ethics* II, Prop. 7: "The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things"; II; Prop. 13, Lemma 3: "A body in motion must be determined to motion or rest by another body, which was also determined to motion or rest by another, and that in its turn by another, and so on *ad infinitum*"; and III, Prop. 2: "The body cannot determine the mind to thought, neither can the mind determine the body to motion and rest, nor to anything else if there be anything else" (Jonas, "Spinoza and the Theory of Organism," 217–18; with idem, "Parallelism and Complementarity," 124).

[33] Jonas, "Spinoza and the Theory of Organism," 218–19.

to fully appreciate Spinoza's overall claim to have conceptualized mind and body together *more geometrico* (in a geometrical manner).[34] However all this may be, in line with the mind-body parallelism to which Jonas is calling attention, Spinoza ascribes self-awareness—and so self-identity—not just to human beings (though to them above all) but to any and every organism as such, whatever its degree of complicatedness, i.e., however rich the mathematical configuration describing the metabolic and other movements of its component materials.

4. Looked at as a composite body (i.e., in the "mode" of extension), an organism might seem to be nothing more than the product of materials whose movements originate outside it—like the particles of the wave mentioned earlier. When Spinoza speaks of the *conatus* (endeavor) of an organism to persist even or especially during the impingements of things that environ it, we might therefore be tempted to limit the meaning of this term to the force of inertia that governs the organism's outward movements. But that is not the whole story. *Conatus* also refers to the organism's more or less conscious self-assertion that, in line with the aforementioned mind-body parallelism, necessarily accompanies those outward movements and shows up empirically as the organism's concomitant awareness of obstacles to its persistence and of its need to engage in movements of its own in order to overcome those obstacles. This is where Spinoza locates the organism's selfhood or autonomy.[35] In Spinoza's argument, as in Jonas's, autonomy is by no means incompatible with a "deterministic" physics, i.e., one that takes its bearings entirely by proximate or efficient causes.[36] On the contrary, efficient causality and autonomy are interdependent. Jonas quotes Spinoza's speaking of the link between body and mind as follows: "in proportion as one body is fitter than others to *do or suffer many things* [*severally*] *at once*, in the same proportion will its mind be fitter to perceive many things at once."[37]

[34] I.e., as Spinoza says concerning the intention of his book as a whole, "to consider human actions and appetites just as if it were a question of lines, planes or [mathematically configured] bodies" (*Ethics* III, Preface).

[35] Ibid., 222–23.

[36] Spinoza's "determinism" seems to be the consequence of the *Ethics*' thoroughgoing insistence that the movements of extended bodies be explained exclusively in terms of extension, to which thoughts (the sole locus of purposes) remain extraneous; see also nn. 9 and 30, above.

[37] *Ethics* II, Prop. 13 Scholium (Jonas's translation, interpolation, and italics; see Jonas, "Spinoza and the Theory of Organism," 220; cf. 223).

The words Jonas italicizes are Spinoza's pithy way of describing the organism's simultaneous autonomy (or capacity to "*do many things*") and dependence (or capacity to "*suffer many things*") vis-à-vis its environment. Spinoza anticipates what we have already seen Jonas himself point out more fully in *The Phenomenon of Life*, namely, that these two seeming opposites are mutually indispensable and mutually irreducible in organic life, no matter how simple or complicated the organism may be. "Here," Jonas comments approvingly, "is proof of his profundity."[38]

5. Jonas does not elaborate how Spinoza may be said to account for the notion of transcendence as an organism's conscious anticipation of events in its spatio-temporal environs, not in his "Spinoza and the Theory of Organism" anyway. Let me therefore postpone commenting further on this[39]—as well as on why Jonas does not go so far as to call himself a Spinozist, i.e., on Jonas's critique of Spinoza[40]—till after I have said something about Naess.

V

Whereas Jonas finds Spinoza primarily of philosophical interest in his own right and only secondarily (or by implication) of interest as regards environmental ethics, Naess finds him only secondarily of philosophical interest in his own right and primarily of interest as regards environmental ethics. Jonas, as we have seen, is drawn to Spinoza's intrinsically attractive (if ultimately unsatisfactory) answer to a pressing philosophical question—Are the integrity and heterogeneity of organic life intelligible on the basis of modern science?—though his answer is by implication illuminating for environmental ethics as well. Naess, on the other hand, is drawn to Spinoza for only quasi-philosophical reasons. He looks to Spinoza for "inspiration."[41] He sees a kinship between the putatively inspiring teaching of the *Ethics* and the politically urgent message of Deep Ecology. In Naess's words, Deep Ecology promotes "*the equal right*

[38] Ibid., 223.

[39] See nn. 64–66 and 69, below.

[40] See Jonas, "Parallelism and Complementarity," 124ff. Also, Hans Jonas, "Matter, Mind, and Creation: Cosmological Evidence and Cosmogonic Speculation," in idem, *Mortality and Morality: A Search for the Good after Auschwitz*, ed. Lawrence Vogel (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 165–97, here 185–86.

[41] Naess, *Spinoza and the Deep Ecology Movement*, 2, with 1, 8, 15.

to live and blossom" for all organisms, i.e., not just for human beings or at the convenience of human beings.[42] Naess admits that Spinoza does not agree exactly, but only approximately, with Deep Ecology here. In particular, Spinoza does not quite agree that animals have the same right as humans to survive and flourish.[43] Naess does not spell out Spinoza's argument concerning human versus animal rights, however, so as to let us compare it for ourselves with the corresponding views of Deep Ecology. It is enough for him to tell us from the outset that he finds Spinoza's system as a whole incoherent or impenetrable[44] and, in any case, "not... one that can help ecologically conscious people to articulate their basic attitudes."[45] His solution to the mismatch in detail between Spinoza and Deep Ecology, then, is to provide a "reconstruction" of selected passages in the text of the *Ethics* for the purpose of letting Deep Ecologists "'feel at home' with Spinoza," i.e., to merge the passages he selects with the "attitude towards nature found among a significant subgroup of researchers, poets and people with no special status."[46] In other words, he treats Spinoza as if he were a fellow ideologue. As an interpreter of Spinoza, Naess is, by Jonas's lights, a "camp follower" rather than a philosopher.[47]

This approach to Spinoza may perhaps be defended on the grounds that the *Ethics*, lacking a purely logical coherence (as we have already seen from Jonas),[48] is held together by "the strangely intimate relations of many terms in [it]."[49] Naess's ecologically inviting, if idiosyncratic, gloss on the *Ethics* proceeds by way of a semantic description of "terms... which *to my mind* are extraordinarily helpful when we try

[42] Naess, *Ecology, Community, and Lifestyle*, 28 (Naess's italics).

[43] Naess, *Spinoza and the Deep Ecology Movement*, 14. He alludes without citation to Spinoza, *Ethics* IV, Prop. 37, Scholium 1.

[44] Jonas, in contrast, finds it (knowingly) incoherent but (for that very reason) not impenetrable (see n. 26, above).

[45] Naess, *Spinoza and the Deep Ecology Movement*, 1–2, 3, 4, 7–8, 10, 11.

[46] Ibid., 7, 10. See also Arne Naess, *Freedom, Emotion, and Self-Subsistence: The Structure of a Central Part of Spinoza's Ethics* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1975), 11.

[47] See n. 5, above. Consider Naess's programmatic statement: "Philosophical and religious sources have played a role in the activism of the kind of environmentalism or deep ecology movement which includes the integration of both academic philosophy and activism" (Naess, *Spinoza and the Deep Ecology Movement*, 8). Unfortunately, it is hard to see what Naess means by "integration" here besides "co-opting" (i.e., an abuse of Spinoza's meaning in a manner analogous to the abuse of natural creatures against which Deep Ecology rightly protests).

[48] See n. 26, above.

[49] Naess, *Spinoza and the Deep Ecology Movement*, 11.

to express the fundamental views which have motivated our 'environmental activism.'"[50] Among his selected terms is *amor intellectualis Dei* ("intellectual love of God"). Given Spinoza's "immanent" view of God, i.e., his assimilating of God to nature, this term turns out to mean the loving knowledge, or knowledgeable loving, of each and every one of God's (i.e., nature's) creatures. Although there is precedent for the term among Christian and Jewish theologians, as Naess learns from Harry Austryn Wolfson,[51] a sign that Spinoza is innovating theologically is his refraining from calling God (or nature) good.[52] When Spinoza says that God is *perfectissimus* or *summe perfectus* ("maximally perfect"), he means simply that God (i.e., nature) is complete as is. This same notion of "perfection" as completeness, or being all that one can be, Naess also finds in connection with a related term in the *Ethics: laetitia* (joy). Joy is the emotion by which the mind becomes, in Naess's words, more "perfect" in the sense of "more whole through activeness [*sic*] and power"; sorrow, the opposite of joy, stems from "passivity, *lack* of active expression," i.e., inability to express or realize oneself as an individual.[53] Naess explains what Spinoza means by "activeness" (Naess's own word) by quoting *Ethics* III, Definition 2: "I say we act, when something in us or outside us happens, of which we are the adequate cause, that is... when something follows in us or outside us or from our nature, something that can only be understood clearly and distinctly from it alone."

"Activeness" is thus the polar opposite of passivity or inertness, especially in the political sense as understood by Naess's own Deep Ecology movement and by "the two other great contemporary movements, the peace movement and social justice movement." These movements are each "dependent upon *active* participation of a minority who is able to use part of their time and energy to serve a great cause"—namely,

[50] Ibid., 2 (Naess's italics).

[51] Naess quotes Harry A. Wolfson's *The Philosophy of Spinoza* (2 vols.; Cleveland: Meridian Books, 1958), 2:304–5, on Thomas Aquinas and Abravanel ("Leo Hebraeus"); see Naess, *Spinoza and the Deep Ecology Movement*, 2–3.

[52] Naess does not go on to ask how Spinoza arrived, quasi-theologically and with some semblance of persuasiveness, at the novel meanings of the theological terms he inherited. The *Ethics* does not answer this question; it merely stipulates the novel meanings, such as they are, in its quasi-Euclidean definitions, etc. Spinoza's elaborate and highly rhetorical argument for those novel meanings is to be found, rather, in his *Theologico-Political Treatise*, where he is primarily addressing theologians who are potential (Spinozist) philosophers.

[53] Naess, *Spinoza and the Deep Ecology Movement*, 8 (Naess's italics).

overcoming "the intense frustration and sorrow felt by millions in the present situation on Earth... by jointly entering into *active* relations, partaking each according to his own capacity and special interests."[54] In sum, Naess finds mirrored in Spinoza the view that God or nature creates[55] an infinite variety of individuals, subhuman as well as human, who endeavor to live and flourish and meanwhile are able in principle—in the case of humans, at least—to devote themselves cooperatively to liberating others, subhuman as well as human, from political obstacles that block each from self-expression or self-realization.

Naess is of the opinion that, beyond supplying the broad ideological infrastructure just sketched, Spinoza is not much help in providing inspiration for the strictly political tasks facing Deep Ecology nowadays.[56] His opinion is, to say the least, not very well informed. It overlooks the likelihood that Spinoza, as the philosophical founder of modern liberal democracy, might offer some statesmanlike guidance for how to think and act in the political setting whose deep infrastructure he also sketched.[57] Then again, I cannot help noting that the political movement Naess founded is vulnerable to criticism for its undemocratic, even anti-democratic rhetoric and platforms.[58] But having promised to not

[54] Ibid., 8–9 (my italics).

[55] As Naess points out, Spinoza's term for God or nature as creator is *natura naturans* (ibid., 9). The complementary term, for the plethora and diversity of creatures, is *natura naturata*; see, for Spinoza's explanation of both terms, *Ethics* I, Prop. 29, Scholium. Approximate (though admittedly cumbersome) translations of these terms are "nature as self-engendering" and "nature as self-engendered," respectively. The former term is also found in Bacon, *New Organon* II.1. (In the translation by Jardine and Silverthorne [*op. cit.*, n. 11, above], 102, it appears as "causative nature.")

[56] "Can something be learned from Seventeenth Century Spinoza about the Twentieth Century frustrating political situation? Not very much, I think." Naess omits any consideration of the particulars of Spinoza's *Theologico-Political Treatise*, which he does not bother to mention by name and whose argument he trivializes or dismisses offhand by asserting, peremptorily: "The understanding of Spinoza's political opinion is clearly dependent upon what he says in the *Ethics* and other works, and upon the special social and political conditions in the Netherlands at that time" (Naess, *Spinoza and the Deep Ecology Movement*, 14). Concerning the *Ethics*' inherent dependence on the *Treatise, pace* Naess, see nn. 9 and 53, above.

[57] See, e.g., *Theologico-Political Treatise*, chap. 20 (especially 20.4.4–7, in the Yaffe pagination).

[58] For a lively and trenchant critique of Naess's (and others') politically dubious "utopianism," see Charles T. Rubin, *The Green Crusade: Rethinking the Roots of Environmentalism* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1994), especially 175–211. See also the collection of thoughtful essays by various hands in *Conservation Reconsidered: Nature, Virtue, and American Liberal Democracy*, ed. Charles T. Rubin (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000).

to stray too far from Naess's own purview concerning Spinoza, I limit any further criticism to my overall conclusion, next.

VI

It is hard to tell how Naess contributes to his ecologically conscientious reader's self-understanding by characterizing the central teaching of Spinoza's *Ethics* as "panpsychism."[59] This expression glosses over the fact that "psyche" in the meaning of "soul" (*anima*) does not show up in any proposition or demonstration in the *Ethics*.[60] Spinoza prefers the term *animus* ("spirit," or perhaps "spiritedness"). *Animus* is what is left of soul once its traditionally recognized features are dropped.[61] The remainder no longer includes, for example, intelligence.[62] Except that Spinoza is not a mechanist (as we have already learned from Jonas), *animus* is perhaps aptly characterized in the academic rhetoric of our time as the ghost-in-the-machine of Spinoza's physics.

Jonas's expression "psycho-physical parallelism" does a better job of preparing his reader for the resulting incongruities.[63] To begin with, as he points out, the *Ethics*' mind-body parallelism cannot be sustained empirically. Given that bodies in Spinoza's system are "strictly necessitated" or determined by fixed laws of nature, it follows that "the mental sequences must be as deterministic as the physical"—even

[59] Naess, *Spinoza and the Deep Ecology Movement*, 10. Consider also Jonas's mention of "the theological objection that a purely immanent pantheism and panpsychism—one, therefore, without a transcendental criterion of the good—can be just as much a pandemonism, indeed a pandiabolism" (Jonas, *Mortality and Morality*, 185). See also n. 67, below.

[60] See Giancotti, *Lexicon Spinozanum*, s.v. *anima*.

[61] See Aristotle, *On the Soul*, III.3 (Sachs, 132ff.) with the glossary in Spinoza, *Theologico-Political Treatise*, trans. Yaffe, s.v. "soul." Consider also Kass, *Toward a More Natural Science*, 270–71, with 199: "while it is true that the [modern] physician has been rightly committed more to patient good than to patient rights, to patient need than to patient wish, it is also true that physicians frequently now hold too narrow a view of need and good, too shrunken a view of the integrity of the human organism, and almost no view at all of the riches and mysteries of the human soul. Modern science and modern medicine have not taught our culture well on most of these matters."

[62] See Leo Strauss, "Einleitung zu Moses Mendelssohns 'Morgenstunden' und 'An die Freunde Lessings,'" in *Moses Mendelssohns Gesammelte Schriften, Jubiläumsausgabe* (26 vols.; Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: Friedrich Frommann Verlag [Günther Holzboog]: 1972–), vol. III, pt. 2, xliii.

[63] Jonas too speaks in general of "soul" in the *Ethics*, though this word does not seem to get in the way of his pertinent observations and criticisms.

though "intramental determinism" lacks strictly intramental evidence but "is merely postulated" for the sake of formal symmetry.[64] Parallelism between bodily and mental events thus turns out to mean that the latter are arbitrarily defined in terms of the former, so as to be ontologically dependent on them as epiphenomena of the body and not modes in their own right after all.[65] Nor is this everything. Spinoza thereby fails to acknowledge the distinctiveness and precariousness of organic life in the larger inorganic setting of nature as a whole.[66] Jonas traces Spinoza's failure to his inherited (Cartesian) premise, dubious as we have already seen it to be, that the heterogeneity of living bodies and their manifest rarity in the cosmos can be sufficiently accounted for by assimilating their movements at bottom, i.e., ontologically, to the same, homogeneous laws of nature which govern the movements of "dead" bodies.

Jonas himself is far from recommending a return to Aristotelian biology. "The modern discovery that knowing nature requires coming to grips with nature," he remarks, "has permanently corrected Aristotle's 'contemplative' view of theory."[67] In saying as much, he spells out what Spinoza (and Descartes before him) had meant to suggest by, among other things, the studied ambiguity of their use of the term *ratio* to mean both "reason" and "plan."[68] However this may be, living as he does

[64] Jonas, "Parallelism and Complementarity," 125. Cf. Jonas's remark on Spinoza, *Ethics* III, Prop. 2, quoted in n. 26, above.

[65] Idem, "Parallelism and Complementarity," 125–26. Cf. the passages quoted in n. 33, above. See also Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 205–31.

[66] Ibid., 136–40; idem, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 275–77; idem, *Mortality and Morality*, 186. On the related question of transcendence in Spinoza, consider Jonas's remark on Whitehead: "The deep anxiety of biological existence has no place in his magnificent scheme. Whitehead, in this respect like Hegel, has written in his metaphysics a story of intrinsically secured success: all becoming is self-realization, each event is in itself complete (or it would not be actual), each perishing a seal on the fact of completion achieved. 'Death, where is thy sting?'" (Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 96).

[67] Ibid., 205.

[68] The ambiguity shows up, e.g., in Spinoza's overall statement of intent in the preface to *Ethics* III. There he says that he intends to demonstrate *certâ ratione* that human life is not a separate imperium within the larger imperium of nature but, like everything else, simply follows the predetermined laws of nature. Spinoza's Latin expression is equivocal. It could mean either 1) that he will supply a "certain reason" in the sense of elaborating a theoretical account (*ratio*) of human life which is immune to doubt (or "certain") inasmuch as it appeals to nothing over and above the laws of nature; or 2) that he will do so in the sense of imposing a yet-to-be-determined (or "a certain") plan (*ratio*) that will, if implemented, bring a salutary order to human life as a practical result; or 3), as is likely, both at the same time. Cf. the glossary in Spinoza, *Theologico-Political*

in the wake of (Descartes and) Spinoza and especially Darwin, Jonas is no philosophical Luddite. He offers a way to offset post-Darwinian biology's Cartesian tendency to treat life as if it were non-life, not by disregarding the universal and homogeneous laws of nature to which it appeals, but by supplementing them. Jonas's supplement takes the form of a "myth."[69] Let me conclude by briefly summarizing his myth and commenting on its place in the argument of *The Phenomenon of Life*, since it brings to light the unresolved tension I promised to show (in my title) between "reason" and "feeling."

The myth is this. God's creating the world follows an irrevocable decision to expose himself to "the endless variety of becoming," by staking his moral and ontological integrity on how well or poorly living creatures, human as well as subhuman, develop and flourish on their own. Two sub-images round out this myth. They are borrowed from Jewish tradition and suitably revised. One is the symbol of the "Book of Life," a heavenly ledger recording our deeds as credits or debits which measure whether or not we deserve individual immortality. Jonas modifies this symbol by removing from the ledger any and all names, so as to restrict the ledger to a tally of the deeds themselves. While the resulting tally would no longer be of immediate interest to the individuals whose deeds are being recorded, it would be of pressing interest to the divine record-keeper—as the sole measure of the moral worth of his having created the world to begin with. A second Jewish symbol is that of the "image of God." Jonas modifies it partly in line with a similar image that occurs in ancient Gnostic texts, and partly in line with a Romantic novelist's independent variation on that image. The Romantic novel is Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. There the gradual accumulation of moral depravities on the part of the title character, a young upwardly-mobile professional in Edwardian London, is seen to bring about bit by bit the concomitant despoiling and defiling of his features as depicted in his specially commissioned oil portrait, even though (or just because) those same depravities remain invisible in the outward

Treatise, trans. Yaffe, s.v. "certain," "reason." In a similar vein, Descartes assimilates the meanings of, e.g., *raison* and *bon sens* in *Discours* I, ¶ 1, and adds, in confirmation of the resulting ambiguity, "ce n'est pas assez d'avoir l'esprit bon, mais le principal est de l'appliquer bien."

[69] Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 261, 275ff.

features of the upwardly-mobile professional himself.[70] Jonas's additional appeal to an analogous notion in the Gnostic texts[71] lets him remove the purely personal elements of the notion of defilement-at-a-distance in the following way. The texts speak of the consummation of the divine self at the moment of the final dissolution of the cosmos, where that self reclaims all the component features of his original image which had been scattered into the cosmos at the moment of its creation and variously recombined during the world's ongoing processes. Together, these syncretized images—Jewish, Gnostic, and Romantic—suggest that the imprint of each morally significant deed, whether admirable or execrable, remains indelible, as their sum-total merges gradually and cumulatively to etch the face of a God who responds in knowing silence—sometimes with gratification, sometimes with horror—to the historical record of man's deeds vis-à-vis his fellow-creatures.

Putting aside the content of Jonas's myth, I limit myself to asking: What is its place in Jonas's evolutionary-existential argument? It is not simply an argument-extender. It is, after all, a myth. Nevertheless it seems indispensable to his argument in that it suggests something of how we are to view that (or any such) argument as a whole.

In tracing ontologically what differentiates life from non-life and higher organisms from lower ones, Jonas locates images (myths, symbols) at the evolutionary origins of human life.[72] They emerge at the transition point where animal life ceases to be *merely* sentient (or "feeling") and becomes *also* rational. Ontologically speaking, then, they partake of reason, albeit in varying degrees. When thoughtfully constructed and recognized for what they are, images—especially those in the form of myths—are not necessarily crude "objectifications" (as they would be if meant literally), nor even sophisticated ones (as they would be if taken merely allegorically), but, in Jonas's allusive phrase, "the glass through which we darkly see."[73] By "we," Jonas means—if I may use pre-Darwinian (Platonic-Aristotelian) language—"we rational animals."

[70] At the title character's untimely death, the images are mysteriously reversed—the figure in the portrait regains its pristine youth and innocence, and the corpse suddenly takes on all the disfigurements that had been absorbed bit by bit into the portrait.

[71] Cf. Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 273, with ibid., 211–34; and Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), 112–29.

[72] Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 157–82.

[73] Ibid., 261.

In the present context, the rest of his phrase suggests, as he has been saying all along, that rational animals and their ways of knowing and acting cannot be separated neatly from their sub-rational ("feeling") organic infrastructure. Jonas's venture into myth at the culminating point of his argument in *The Phenomenon of Life* is thus a way of reiterating what I have called, much less elegantly, the unresolved tension in it between reason and feeling.

With his explicit crossover into myth, Jonas leads us beyond ontology, the manifest subject of his book. We are forced to consider, or reconsider, the question of how reason as such fits (or perhaps fails to fit) with the not-exactly-rational—or, somewhat differently stated, how science fits (or perhaps fails to fit) with practical life. As Jonas himself recognizes by appealing all too briefly to Plato as precedent for his own recourse to myth,[74] the question here is independent of this or that ontology, whether Cartesian or (as in Jonas's case) post-Darwinian or other. It is, even so, philosophical. It is provoked by, but in the last analysis independent of, the perplexities we face in connection with what Jonas has called the practical uses of theory.

[74] Ibid., 275.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

CARETAKER OR CITIZEN: HANS JONAS, ALDO LEOPOLD, AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF JEWISH ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS[1]

Lawrence Troster

Hans Jonas's last public words ended with this prophetic call:

> It was once religion which told us that we are all sinners, because of original sin. It is now the ecology of our planet which pronounces us all to be sinners because of the excessive exploits of human inventiveness. It was once religion which threatened us with a last judgment at the end of days. It is now our tortured planet which predicts the arrival of such a day without any heavenly intervention. The latest revelation—from no Mount Sinai, from no Mount of the Sermon, from no Bo (tree of Buddha)—is the outcry of mute things themselves that we must heed by curbing our powers over creation, lest we perish together on a wasteland of what was creation.[2]

I first encountered the work of Hans Jonas twenty years ago when I read "The Concept of God After Auschwitz."[3] At the time, I did not fully appreciate Jonas's radical theology. Since that initial reading I returned to Jonas's work again and again as my own interest in

[1] I dedicate this paper to the memory of my late father Jack Martin Troster z"l (1913–1984) who, like Hans Jonas, was a combat veteran in World War II.

[2] Hans Jonas, "The Outcry of Mute Things," in idem, *Mortality and Morality: A Search for the Good After Auschwitz*, ed. Lawrence Vogel (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 198–202, here 201f. This is from a speech that Jonas gave on January 30, 1993, in Italy on the occasion of receiving the Premio Nonino Prize. He passed away six days later, upon his return to the United States.

[3] Now printed in *Mortality and Morality*, 131–43. This version is a translation of a lecture given in Germany in 1984. It was a revised version of "The Concept of God After Auschwitz," published in *Out of the Whirlwind: A Reader of Holocaust Literature*, ed. Albert H. Friedlander (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1968), 465–76. This incorporated material from an earlier essay, "Immortality and the Modern Temper," published originally in 1962 but also included in *The Phenomenon of Life: Toward a Philosophical Biology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982, 2nd edition), 262–81; and in *Mortality and Morality*, 113–30. I first encountered the essay in *Out of the Whirlwind* and referred to it in my article, "The Definition of Evil in Post-Holocaust Theology," *Conservative Judaism* 39, no. 1 (Fall 1986): 81–98.

bioethics and environmentalism grew. As I spoke and wrote about Jonas,[4] it became clear that he and his work are not generally known among Jews and Christians, even among those who are interested in the kind of philosophy and theology that he represented.[5] Within Jewish circles, Jonas has been one of the most neglected philosophers of the twentieth century. And while among European environmentalists his writing on environmental ethics is highly regarded,[6] among North American environmentalists his work is not well known.[7] This is the case despite the esteem that his work on bioethics and in general discussions of the relationship between religion and science has generated.[8]

Jonas is the only modern Jewish philosopher who has fully integrated philosophy, science, theology, and environmental ethics. At this time, Jewish environmental theology, and ethics is still in its infancy and there are few real thinkers upon whom a modern Jewish environmental ethic can be based.[9] I believe, however, that Jonas's work can provide a foundation for a Jewish environmental ethic. Jonas's work is a prophetic voice that challenged the way we live. Unfortunately, most of the North American Jewish community has not yet been willing to listen to such a call. We have been, individually and communally, too embedded

[4] Lawrence Troster, "Hans Jonas and the Concept of God after the Holocaust," *Conservative Judaism* 55, no. 4 (Summer 2003): 16–25.

[5] See Richard Wolin, *Heidegger's Children: Hannah Arendt, Karl Löwith, Hans Jonas, and Herbert Marcuse* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 107: "there is little doubt that his was one of the more original and important philosophical minds of the twentieth century. Sadly, it seems that his philosophy never really caught on in North America." Exceptions are William Kaufman, *The Evolving God in Jewish Process Theology* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1997), 150–54; Sandra B. Lubarsky and David Ray Griffin, *Jewish Theology and Process Thought* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 15, 143–57; Martin D. Yaffe, ed., *Judaism and Environmental Ethics* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2001), 34–36, 250–63; John F. Haught, *God After Darwin: A Theology of Evolution* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2000), 168–84.

[6] Jonas's writings were an important influence on the Green Party in Germany. See Christian Schutze, "The Political and Intellectual Influence of Hans Jonas," *Hastings Center Report* 25, no. 7 (1995): 40–43; Vogel's introduction to *Mortality and Morality*, 3; and Wolin, *Heidegger's Children*, 107–8.

[7] For example, the recently published *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*, ed. Bron R. Taylor and Jeffery Kaplan (London: Continuum, 2005), does not have an entry for Jonas.

[8] See, for example, the essays of Leon Kass and Strachan Donnelley in *Hastings Center Report* 25, no. 7 (1995).

[9] An exception to this is Arthur Green, who bases his environmental ethics on Kabbalah. See Arthur Green, *Seek My Face, Speak My Name: A Contemporary Jewish Theology* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Inc., 1992); and idem, "A Kabbalah for the Environmental Age," in *Judaism and Ecology: Created World and Revealed Word*, ed. Hava Tirosh-Samuelson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 3–15.

within the American consumer culture to take a strong stance in the emerging environmental crisis.

It is my purpose here to examine the "land ethic" of Aldo Leopold (1887–1948) and compare it to Hans Jonas's environmental principle, "the imperative of responsibility." I believe that both of these concepts are complementary environmental principles and together may begin to provide a more solid environmental, scientific, and philosophical basis for Jewish environmental ethics than has been formulated up until now. I believe that with such a foundation, Jewish environmental ethics can begin to have a real impact on Jewish thought and practice.

It can be said that environmental ethics has arisen out of a sense of fear and a sense of tragedy. The fear comes from the growing realization of the human cost of environmental destruction; the tragedy comes from the realization of how humanity is bringing about the extinction of so many other species and has irrevocably damaged the biosphere.[10] Environmental ethics attempts to reassess the relationship of humanity to the natural world in order to stem human environmental damage and provide a hopeful vision of a renewed more sustainable future for all life on earth. In the end, environmental ethics is about assessing and limiting human power. Thus, Leopold's land ethic and Jonas's ethic of responsibility are two ethical models that limit human power over the natural world and expand the human ethical concern to the non-human world. Taken together, they can provide a bridge over the divide between stewardship ethics and biocentrism that is often found in environmental ethics.[11]

This divide between biocentrism and stewardship ethics is a particular problem for Jewish environmental ethics, which tends toward

[10] For example, Holmes Rolston III has written: "Destroying species is like tearing pages out of an unread book, written in a language humans hardly know how to read, about the place where we live.... Several billion years worth of creative toil, several million species of teeming life, have been handed over to the care of the latecoming species in which the mind has flowered and morals have emerged. On the naturalistic account, the host of species has a claim to care in its own right. There is something Newtonian, not yet Einsteinian, besides something morally naïve, about living in a reference frame where one species takes itself as absolute and values everything else relative to its utility". See Holmes Rolston III, "Biodiversity," in *A Companion to Environmental Philosophy*, ed. Dale Jamieson (2001; Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 402–15, here 414.

[11] See the articles on "Normative Ethics" by Robert Elliot and "Deep Ecology" by Freya Mathews in Jamieson, ed., *A Companion to Environmental Philosophy*, 177–91 and 218–33.

stewardship ethics and has not yet incorporated biocentrism in any significant way. As Hava Tirosh-Samuelson has pointed out,[12] there is in Judaism a tension in regard to the natural world embedded in two different theological concepts: creation and revelation. In creation theology, God is revealed to humans through the natural world. Revelation leads to God through Torah, or law.[13] In Torah, humans are created in the image of God, which makes them predominant over other forms of life. This sets the stage for a stewardship ethic in which humans, acting as God's agents, are allowed to use the natural world for their own benefit within certain parameters that restrain their action. Jewish law (*halakhah*), as a concrete expression of Torah, has not until now gone beyond stewardship ethics in the few examples there are of

[12] Hava Tirosh-Samuelson, "Nature in the Sources of Judaism," *Daedalus: The Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 130, no. 4 (Fall 2001): 99–124.

[13] Christian theologians and scientists in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries often used a theological construct called the "Two Books of God," the Book of Nature and the Book of Scripture, to describe the relationship between the truth of Scripture and the truth of science. The origin of the metaphor may be a commentary of Augustine to Psalm 45:4: "The pages of divine scripture are open for you to read, and the wide world is open for you to see. Only the literate can read the books, but even the illiterate can read the book of the world" (*The Works of Saint Augustine, Part III, Volume 16: Exposition of the Psalms, 33–50*, trans. and notes by Maria Boulding [Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2000], 315); but the definitive origin is from late medieval pulpit rhetoric. See Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (1953; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 315–26. For the use of the metaphor by Christian scientists, see John Hedley Brooke, *Science and Religion: Some Historical Perspectives* (1991; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 22; and James R. Moore, "Geologists and Interpreters of Genesis in the Nineteenth Century," in *God and Nature: Historical Essays on the Encounter between Christianity and Science*, ed. David C. Lindberg and Ronald L. Numbers (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 322–50. For a modern Christian theologian's attempt to revive the metaphor, see Roland Mushat Frye, "Two Books of God," *Theology Today* 39, no. 2 (July 1982): 260–66. Byron L. Sherwin, "Judaism, Technology and the 'New Science,'" *Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly*, 3 (2001): 78–89, here 80, claims that the "Two Books" metaphor is found in Gersonides' commentary to Exodus 33:32, but Moshe Idel places Gersonides in the context of a medieval tradition that the Torah is an all-comprehensive book. Idel also shows how in medieval Kabbalah, the book metaphor was used to describe the heavens as a source of astrological knowledge in contrast to the book of Torah, which is the source of law. See Moshe Idel, *Absorbing Perfections: Kabbalah and Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 123–24, 482–92. In a private communication, Professor Menachem Fisch has told me that he believes that no Jewish theologian ever used this construct either in its concrete metaphor or its idea of two sources of revelation. For Judaism there is only one book, the Torah, in which all wisdom was contained. He believes, and I concur, that Maimonides came closest to expressing the idea of the natural world being a source of revelation. See *Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Yesodei Ha-Torah* 2:1.

environmental halakhah.[14] This theological/ethical perspective can be called the caretaker model of the human/natural world relationship.

A creation perspective, on the other hand, can be seen as more holistic and allows for a universal ethic, one that need not be specifically Jewish. Creation theology expresses a model of the natural world in which humans are part of an order in which they do not necessarily have a prime place.[15] Humanity is, in this model, part of a creation community in which they are, to use Leopold's term, citizens and not conquerors.[16] This theological/ethical perspective can be called the citizen model of the human/natural world relationship.

The apparent tension between the caretaker model and the citizen model can be resolved if we understand that both are attempts to control human power over the natural world but start from different initial principles. Both Leopold and Jonas, faced with the effects of human power on the biosphere, developed distinct ethical models to try to limit human power by connecting humans with the rest of creation. Leopold limits human power by tying humans to a larger ethical community that includes the whole biosphere. In Jonas, human power over the natural world brings together human will and obligation to act with responsibility as the caretaker of the rest of life. While the impetus for Leopold is from a sense of the tragic loss of biodiversity that he saw around him as a forester and conservationist, the impetus for Jonas is a "heuristic of fear" resulting from his experience with the destructive power of modern technology that he experienced as a Jew in Hitler's Germany and as a combat soldier in World War II, and from the tragic loss of his mother, who died at Auschwitz.

[14] See, for example, David Ehrenfeld and Phillip J. Bentley, "Judaism and the Practice of Stewardship," and Eilon Schwartz, "*Bal Tashchit*: A Jewish Environmental Precept," in Yaffe, ed., *Judaism and Environmental Ethics*, 125–35, 230–49.

[15] See, for example, the speeches of God in chapters 38–41 of the book of Job. Of this text Jon Levenson has commented, "The brunt of that harangue is that creation is a wondrous and mysterious place that baffles human assumptions and expectations because it is not anthropocentric but theocentric." Jon D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988), 155–56.

[16] Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There* (1949; New York: Ballantine Books, 1970), 240.

1. *Aldo Leopold and the Land Ethic*

Leopold asserted that contemporary ethical theory is inadequate to protect the biosphere and must now be expanded to include non-human life and the landscape itself.[17] He wrote: "There is yet no ethic dealing with man's relationship to the land, to the animals and plants which grow upon it.... The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, water, plants and animals or collectively the land."[18] He also said, "a land ethic changes the role of *Homo sapiens* from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it."[19] In this new ethical approach, something is right when it "preserves the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise."[20]

As J. Baird Callicott has observed,[21] Leopold's land ethic is most popular among professional conservationists and least popular among professional philosophers.[22] Conservationists are primarily concerned with practical problems, such as species extinction and pollution, while philosophers schooled in modern classical theories of ethics are "ill-prepared to comprehend morally such 'holistic' concerns." As such, Leopold's land ethic is often dismissed as not having a sound philosophical foundation. Callicott, however, believes that there is a good philosophical pedigree for Leopold's land ethic, which can be found in the second section of his essay on the land ethic, called "The Ethical Sequence." Here Leopold asserts that the extension of ethics to the land and to ecosystems is part of ecological evolution:

[17] Leopold partly attributes our selfish lack of concern for the environment to a biblically based "Abrahamic concept" of the land. See *A Sand County Almanac*, xviii and 240. See Yaffe, ed., *Judaism and Environmental Ethics*, 2–6 for a critique of Leopold's views of the Bible. J. Baird Callicott, the foremost scholar on Leopold, has also recognized that Leopold's reading of the Bible is similar to Lynn White's view of what Callicott calls the "despotic reading" of Genesis. He points out that John Muir (1838–1914) had a different, more positive interpretation of Genesis. See J. Baird Callicott, *Beyond the Land Ethic: More Essays in Environmental Philosophy* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1999), 187–219.

[18] Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, 238–39.

[19] Ibid., 240.

[20] Ibid., 262.

[21] J. Baird Callicott, "The Land Ethic," in Jamieson, ed., *A Companion to Environmental Philosophy*, 204–17.

[22] Ibid., 204.

> An ethic, ecologically, is a limitation on freedom of action in the struggle for existence. An ethic, philosophically, is a differentiation of social from anti-social conduct. These are two definitions of one thing. The thing has its origin in the tendency of interdependent individuals or groups to evolve modes of cooperation.[23]

In this passage, Leopold is alluding to the evolutionary account of ethics in Darwin's *The Descent of Man* (1871), where Darwin tried to show that all human phenomena evolved by natural selection. But the existence of human ethics seemed to conflict with the theory of evolution, since the "struggle for existence" favored the selfish over the selfless. The selfish should survive better and reproduce in greater numbers. "Therefore greater and greater selfishness, not selflessness, would seem to be nature's choice in any population of organisms, including those ancestral to *Homo sapiens*."[24] Human history, however, shows that the opposite is true. The existence of an ethical impulse in humanity might open the possibility of supernatural divine revelation.

Darwin by this time no longer believed in divine providence[25] and so he resolved this problem by showing that the struggle for existence for many kinds of species, especially humans, is more efficiently achieved collectively and cooperatively than singly or competitively. Cooperative groups have a better possibility of finding food and protecting themselves against predators. Therefore those species that formed societies are more likely to survive and thrive. Human ethics, therefore, evolved in order for human societies to remain integrated and thus have a better chance of survival. Darwin, drawing upon David Hume and Adam Smith, believed that ethics began with moral sentiments grounded in parental affections to care for offspring. Since humans evolved higher levels of intelligence and symbolic language than other species, they eventually created ethical rules, which limited the kind of behavior that is destructive of human society. These ethical rules were eventually codified in the form of commandments. As social groups competed with one another, larger and better-organized groups were more successful than smaller and less well organized ones. Each level of greater

[23] Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, 238.

[24] Callicott, "The Land Ethic," 205.

[25] See Randal Keynes, *Annie's Box: Charles Darwin, His Daughter, and Human Evolution* (London: Fourth Estate, 2001) for a discussion of how Darwin's scientific views on evolution developed in conjunction with his emerging spiritual crisis prompted in part by the tragic death of his daughter Annie.

organization extended the ethical circle and altered the content of the moral code to reflect the new structure.

Leopold takes Darwin's account of the evolution of human ethics and adds an ecological ingredient: the community model, which he derived from the work of biologist Charles Sutherland Elton (1900–1991). For Leopold, ecology "simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land." Once the land is seen as a part of a community to which humans belong and not as a "commodity belonging to us" then there will be a land ethic that "changes the role of *Homo sapiens* from conqueror of the land community to plain member and citizen of it." The land ethic "implies respect for... fellow members and also for the community as such."[26]

While at the beginning of "The Land Ethic" Leopold shows a concern for individuals, by the end of his essay the holistic perspective becomes dominant.[27] This occurs because conservationists are concerned professionally with biological and ecological wholes: populations, species, communities, and ecosystems. They are not concerned with the individuals that make up these structures. Sometimes, in order to preserve an ecosystem, it becomes necessary to eliminate some organisms that may threaten the integrity of the whole. The land ethic, informed by ecology and an ecological worldview, incorporates this perspective.

This holistic view is often seen as a morally problematic element in the land ethic. If, for example, the moral principle of community applies to humans and if a human population of more than 6 billion is a threat to the integrity, stability, and beauty of biotic community, then it is ethically wrong to maintain such a population. Should we not do to that population what we would do when another species threatens an ecosystem? Would not reducing the human population of the world be the morally right thing to do? This possible ethical consequence of the land ethic has given fuel to those who have argued that the land ethic calls for a kind of "environmental fascism" which would subordinate the welfare of the individual to that of community.[28]

[26] Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, 239–40.
[27] Ibid., 262.
[28] Callicott, "The Land Ethic," 210–11.

Callicott rejects this interpretation of the land ethic. He believes that Leopold did not see the land ethic as replacing prior human codes of ethics but as a supplement to them. The duties that become incumbent on us as citizens of the biotic community do not cancel or replace the duties, such as the respect for human rights, attendant on membership in the human community. For Callicott, the land ethic represents a kind of limited ethical pluralism.[29]

One further possible problem with Leopold is that since he formulated the land ethic, there has been a significant change in the scientific paradigm of how the natural world functions. It is no longer scientifically possible to say that the biosphere is a static entity: there are large-scale disturbances such as earthquakes, hurricanes, and even collisions of the earth with asteroids. The biosphere does not exist in a state of static equilibrium but is a dynamic process, what biologist Daniel Botkin calls a "discordant harmony."[30]

While Leopold called for the preserving and conserving of the integrity and stability of the biotic community, he nonetheless understood that ongoing change was an integral part of the natural world. The land ethic's moral principle can nonetheless be maintained if change is understood within the concept of scale: the rate of change as well as the scope of change, temporal change as well as spatial change. While evolutionary change is slow and local, human change because of technology creates changes that are unprecedented in strength, speed, and scope. Even when large-scale natural disturbances such as hurricanes

[29] Ibid., 212–13. Callicott explains this in the following way: The land ethic contains two second-order ethical principles, which provide a priority ranking among first-order ethical principles when they conflict in any given situations. The first second-order principle would be: "obligations generated by membership in more venerable and intimate communities take precedence over those generated in more recently emerged and impersonal communities." For example, family obligations take precedence over civic duties when, because of limited means, we cannot fulfill both. The second second-order principle would be: "stronger interests (for lack of a better word) generate duties that take precedence over duties generated by weaker interests." For example, even though duties to one's own children take precedence over unrelated children in the local town, it would be wrong to give one's own children luxuries while unrelated children lack basic necessities for life (food, shelter, clothing, education) as they have a stronger interest. These second-order principles can also apply when duties to individuals conflict with duties to communities *per se*. Conflicts of duties to human beings could come in conflict with duties to biotic communities: e.g., stopping logging to save the spotted owl.
[30] Daniel Botkin, *Discordant Harmonies: A New Ecology for the Twenty-First Century* (1990; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

occur, this kind of transformation is still within the scale of ecological change and is thus still normative.

Even though we may term anything humans do as "natural," anthropogenic changes may be land-ethically evaluated by norms of appropriate scale. One example is the mass extinction of species. It is a universal scientific consensus that the world is undergoing a mass extinction of species not seen since the death of the dinosaurs at the end of the Mesozoic period 65 million years ago.[31] The rate of extinction is difficult to estimate since the number of species itself is not known. Edward O. Wilson has suggested a global extinction rate of 6 percent of all species per decade.[32] Others put the extinction rate much lower, at about one thousand species per year. The "natural" extinction rate is estimated to be one to two species a year.[33] Human-caused extinctions come from habitat loss, the introduction of exotic species,[34] pollution, overharvesting, and disease.[35] Whatever the actual extinction rate, over the last two hundred years human alteration of the nature of the biosphere has resulted in a major increase in the number of extinct species. The normal extinction rate had previously been exceeded by greater speciation, which is the cause of increased diversity over time. Thus the scale of the extinction of species caused by humans violates the moral principle of the land ethic. The same thing could be said about climate change. It has happened before, but now humans are causing it to occur at an unprecedented rate. While natural disturbances are random and unpredictable, human changes are more frequent, widespread, and regular. They are off the scale

[31] Norman Myers, "Tropical Forests and Their Species: Going, Going...?," in *Biodiversity*, ed. Edward O. Wilson (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1988), 28–35: "the evolutionary impoverishment of the impending extinction spasm plus the number of species involved and the telescoped time scale of the phenomenon, may result in the greatest single setback to life's abundance and diversity since the first flickerings of life almost 4 billion years ago."

[32] Edward O. Wilson, *The Diversity of Life*, 2nd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1999), xiii–xviii. If his estimate of the number of species is correct (his conservative estimate is that there are 13,620,000 species, but some scientists put the figure as high as 100,000,000 species), then this would mean a loss of approximately 817,200 species over the last decade.

[33] Lester Brown, Christopher Flavin, Hilary French, eds., *State of the World 1998: A Worldwatch Institute Report on Progress Toward a Sustainable Society* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998), 41.

[34] This refers to those species from other habitats that have no predators in the ecosystems in which they have been introduced. They spread rapidly, crowding out the native species.

[35] Wilson, ed., *Biodiversity*, xvii.

temporally and spatially.[36] In response to this new dynamic paradigm of the biosphere, Callicott has created a new formulation of the land ethic: "A thing is right when it tends to disturb the biotic community only at normal spatial and temporal scales. It is wrong when it tends otherwise."[37]

The land ethic's community model of the relationship between humans and the rest of creation has two advantages as a basis for an environmental ethic. First of all, it is based on science. The connection between humans, other life, and the landscape is one that Leopold expressed in an earlier section of the *Sand County Almanac* called "Odyssey," where he follows an atom as it makes its way through many circles of life over a long period of time in the ecosystem of the American prairie.[38] The interconnectiveness of all life on earth within the various biological and geochemical cycles is a common theme in environmental science writing.[39]

But the community model also has the ability to create an emotional or even spiritual basis for environmentally ethical behavior. Environmental educator Mitchell Thomashow sees the scientific understanding of human interconnectiveness with the rest of the natural world as central to the creation of an "ecological identity." This ecological identity is defined as the state when "people perceive themselves in reference to nature, as living breathing beings connected to the rhythms of the earth, the biogeochemical cycles, the grand and complex diversity of ecological systems."[40] He further says that, "Intrinsic to an ecological worldview is the ability to see an ecosystem as part of oneself. This knowledge is gained both through an understanding of scientific ecology and the ability to observe and internalize the interconnections and interdependence of all living things."[41] Therefore, the community model

[36] Callicott, "The Land Ethic," 214–16.

[37] Ibid., 216. See also Holmes Rolston III, "The Land Ethic at the Turn of the Millenium," in *Environmental Ethics: Divergence and Convergence*, ed. Susan J. Armstrong and Richard G. Botzler, 3rd ed. (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2004), 392–99. Rolston calls for the land ethic to be expanded to an earth ethic.

[38] Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, 111–14. Primo Levi wrote of a carbon atom in a similar vein. See Primo Levi, *The Periodic Table* (New York: Schocken Books, 1984), 224.

[39] See, for example, David Suzuki, *The Sacred Balance: Rediscovering Our Place in Nature* (1997; Vancouver: Greystone Books, 2002).

[40] Mitchell Thomashow, *Ecological Identity: Becoming a Reflective Environmentalist* (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1996), xiii.

[41] Thomashow, *Ecological Identity*, 12–13.

is not only based on good science but also has the power to evoke an ethical sentiment which may not only impel people to change their view of the natural world but also lead to changes in their actions. If we view ourselves as part of a larger community which encompasses the whole of the earth, it not only enlarges our ethical circle but also creates a sense of ecological kinship.[42]

It has been mentioned above that the community model is an expression of a universal creation theology that need not be specifically Jewish. Nonetheless, this model can be connected to a specifically Jewish environmental ethic if we look beyond the Torah and the usual halakhic sources. It is possible to find texts that emphasize this sense of community and interconnectiveness. One such source is Psalm 148.

Psalm 148 is a creation hymn, a poetic map of the universe. It reflects the Israelite cosmology of a three-part universe: God, heavens, and earth; or heavens, earth, and Sheol.[43] The psalm's structure portrays creation as being divided between a heavenly choir and an earthly choir. The heavenly choir includes the sun, moon, planets, and stars, whose role it is to praise God and to act as witnesses to a revelation of God: "Just as a fine piece of craftsmanship brings glory to its craftsman, so the destiny of the created world is to glorify Yahweh by reflecting divine power."[44] The earthly choir consists of the forces of the nature world, the landscape, animal life (both wild and domesticated) and all kinds of humans. They are copying the heavenly choir, uniting with them in the same role and singing the same song.

[42] There may also be an underlying natural affinity in humans for connection to the diversity of life that is part of our evolutionary background. This is the Biophilia Hypothesis of Edward O. Wilson, first proposed in his book, *Biophilia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984) and later discussed by other scholars in a variety of fields. See Stephen R. Kellert and Edward O. Wilson, *The Biophilia Hypothesis* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 1993), and Stephen R. Kellert, *The Value of Life: Biological Diversity and Human Society* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 1996).

[43] Sometimes it is a four-part universe: God, heavens, earth, Sheol. On the Israelite cosmology see Nahum Sarna, *Understanding Genesis: The Heritage of Biblical Israel* (New York: Schocken Books, 1976), 1–12; Jon D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988); Jonathan Z. Smith, *Map Is Not Territory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 104–28; Robert A. Oden, Jr., "Cosmogony, Cosmology," in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1:1162–71. Later, Jews adopted a seven-part universe, the common cosmology of the Roman Empire and derived from Babylonian astronomy. One of the first explicit uses of the seven-heaven cosmology is found in *2 Enoch*, a pseudepigraphal work dating from the first century CE.

[44] Leslie C. Allen, *Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 21: Psalms 101–150, Revised Edition* (Nashville: Nelson Reference & Electronic, 2002), 393.

The universe reflected by Psalm 148 is a harmonious order in which humans have no primacy of place. They are part of the earthly choir and join in the activity of the heavenly choir in a unification of purpose. There is no dominant human power over the rest of creation. Psalm 148 pictures human society as part of a community of worshippers, which includes animal life, the forces of the natural world, such as the weather, the landscape, and the heavens. The purpose of this community and therefore the purpose of all life is the praise of God. It is possible to use a text like Psalm 148 (and there are others, like Psalm 104 and the final chapters of the book of Job) to create a Jewish version of the community model and thus integrate Leopold's land ethic into Jewish environmental ethics. This might then generate new halakhah, prayers and rituals, which would reflect a more biocentric perspective.

It is true that Jewish traditionalist circles may not accept such extra-halakhic sources for the creation of new law, ritual, and prayer. There are, however, some Jewish theologians and legal scholars who have begun to look to non-halakhic material to generate responses to issues which traditional Jewish law cannot or will not solve. These scholars have utilized the methodology of the late legal theorist Robert Cover, found in his seminal essay, "Nomos and Narrative."[45]

Cover's legal theory allows for the inclusion of non-legal material to have an impact on the creation of new law in situations where previous law has become untenable. One of Cover's examples is the civil rights movement where previous interpretations of the Constitution permitted discrimination. The civil rights movement created a new "story" of the Constitution that demanded change. Cover refers to this method as *jurisgenerative*.[46] Rachel Adler has drawn upon Cover for her feminist theology of Judaism,[47] while Conservative scholar Gordon Tucker has referred to Cover in his formulation of a new response to the issue of homosexuality.[48] Tucker believes that since Conservative

[45] Robert Cover, *Narrative, Violence, and the Law: The Essays of Robert Cover*, ed. Martha Minow, Michael Ryan and Austin Sarat (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 95–172. The essay was first published in the *Harvard Law Review* in 1983.

[46] Robert Cover, *Narrative, Violence, and the Law*, 146–48.

[47] Rachel Adler, *Engendering Judaism: An Inclusive Theology and Ethics* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1998), 21–59. An earlier version of this chapter was published as "Feminist Folktales of Justice: Robert Cover as a Resource for the Renewal of Halakhah," *Conservative Judaism* 45, no. 3 (Spring 1993): 40–55. This issue of *Conservative Judaism* had several articles devoted to Cover.

[48] Gordon Tucker, "The Sayings of the Wise Are Like Goads: An Appreciation of the Works of Robert Cover," *Conservative Judaism* 45, no. 3 (Spring 1993): 17–39. Tucker

theologies of revelation hold that the Torah is not revelation itself but is the record of the "*religious quests of a people, and of their understanding of how God's will commands them*" (italics in original), then the boundary between halakhic material and haggadic material is no longer credible.[49] It is possible to apply this method to the creation of new Jewish environmental halakhah.[50]

2. *Hans Jonas*

Jonas's environmental ethic arises from the fear of the destruction of humanity and from the need to create a philosophical basis for humans' responsibility to save themselves and the planet. His response to the environmental crisis is most fully elucidated in his book, *The Imperative of Responsibility*.[51] In this work, Jonas argued that the environmental crisis emerged from the human impact on the natural world, which is greater and more far-reaching than in any previous age. This unique and novel power comes from modern technology, which is also radically different from the technology of previous ages. Previous ethical systems, centered on interpersonal dealings within relatively narrow horizons of space and time, are no longer adequate to deal with the moral issues now raised. "Modern technology has introduced actions of such novel scale, objects, and consequences that the framework of former ethics can no longer contain them."[52]

has also written a currently unpublished responsum for the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards called, "*Derash ve-Kabel S'char*: Halakhic and Metahalakhic Arguments concerning Judaism and Homosexuality."

[49] Gordon Tucker, "*Derash ve-Kabel S'char*," 22. This view of revelation is consistent with the views of Elliot N. Dorff and Norbert Samuelson, who argue that most modern Jewish theologies redefine revelation as an encounter with God's own self rather than as the communication of specific laws and beliefs. See Elliot N. Dorff, "Medieval and Modern Theories of Revelation," in *Etz Hayim: Torah and Commentary*, ed. David Lieber and Jules Harlow (New York: Rabbinical Assembly and United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, 2001), 1401–5; Norbert M. Samuelson, *Revelation and the God of Israel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[50] Even without a formal legal foundation, I believe that this process has been proceeding in Jewish environmental circles for some years. Witness for example the development of the environmental Tu B'Shevat seder in many Jewish communities. For other examples, see Mark Jacobs, "Jewish Environmentalism: Past Accomplishments and Future Challenges," in Tirosh-Samuelson, *Judaism and Ecology*, 449–77.

[51] Hans Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984).

[52] Ibid., 6.

For Jonas, the lengthened reach of our deeds moves the principle of responsibility into the center of our ethical stage. His theory of responsibility, which he saw as the correlate of power, must therefore be proportionate to the range of modern power. Humans must also have greater foresight into the possible impact of new technology—what Jonas called "scientific futurology." Even with this greater foresight we will not be able to fully predict the effects of modern technological power: "As long as the danger is unknown, we do not know what to preserve and why."[53] We therefore need Jonas's "heuristics of fear" to tell us what is at stake and what we must avoid. We can learn what to avoid from the "revulsion of feeling which acts ahead of knowledge, to apprehend the value whose antithesis so affects us. *We know the thing at stake only when we know that it is at stake*" (italics in original).[54]

Since we are so uncertain about the effects of our technology, and because it could have such far-reaching implications for the human race as well as for the rest of life on earth, caution is now the "core of moral action."[55] This ethic of caution is also found in the Precautionary Principle, an ethical theory which states that an action, particularly one resulting from the introduction of a new technology, should not be carried out if the possible but as yet unknown results of that action are deemed by valid scientific opinion to have a high risk of being negative from an ethical point of view. The principle states that, when results cannot be determined with some kind of precision, actions which might lead to significant harm should be delayed or shunned. According to the Precautionary Principle, new technology should be assessed for indication of harm rather than proof of harm; a cost/benefit analysis of possible harm is not sufficient. The onus of proof of safety is on those who create the technology.[56]

For Jonas, what was at stake was not only other forms of life but also the very survival of humanity. And for Jonas, the survival of humanity was a central ethical principle. In previous ages, human action might lead to the elimination of a tribe or a nation, but now all of humanity is at risk. And if humanity were to be destroyed, it would not be the

[53] Ibid., 27.

[54] Ibid. "The perception of the *malum* is infinitely easier to us than the perception of the *bonum*; it is more direct, more compelling, less given to differences of opinion or taste, and most of all, obtruding itself without our looking for it."

[55] Ibid., 38.

[56] See Timothy O'Riordan and James Cameron, eds., *Interpreting the Precautionary Principle* (London: Earthscan Publications Ltd., 1994).

extinction of just another species in the evolutionary history of the universe, it would be a cosmic disaster. Jonas believed that humanity matters to Being itself as "the maximal actualization of its potentiality for purposiveness."[57] If we believe this, then the future of humanity and the world is metaphysically significant. Therefore, "No consent to their nonexistence or dehumanization is obtainable from the humanity of the future.... For there is... *an unconditional duty* for mankind to exist, and it must not be confounded with the conditional duty of each and every man to exist. The right of the individual to commit suicide is morally arguable and must at least for particular circumstances be conceded: under no circumstances has mankind that right"[58] (italics in original). Therefore any technology that can put humanity at risk is immoral. "Never must the existence or the essence of man as a whole be made a stake in the hazards of action."[59]

In order to have an ethics adequate to save humanity, it must be based on a doctrine of general being; metaphysics must underpin ethics. A philosophy of nature is required which will bridge the gap between the scientific "is" and morally binding "ought." We will then be able to understand what are the legitimate objectives for our power: "the more modest and fitting goal is set to save the survival and humanity of man from the excesses of his own power."[60]

Jonas's ethic of responsibility is part of his philosophical program, arising from his critique of modern nihilism, which he felt lay at the heart of modern philosophy. According to Jonas, modern nihilism is the source of the dislocation of humans from the natural world and the increasing environmental devastation. Lawrence Vogel has shown[61] how Jonas, after laying out the critique of modern nihilism, then constructed a philosophical biology based on the concept of the organism. From this philosophical biology, Jonas created his ethic of the "imperative of responsibility." He attempts to create a philosophy that is also consistent with modern science.

[57] Lawrence Vogel, "Hans Jonas's Exodus: From German Existentialism to Post-Holocaust Theology," in Jonas, *Mortality and Morality*, 1–40, here 16.
[58] Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility*, 36–37.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid., x.
[61] Lawrence Vogel, "Does Environmental Ethics Need a Metaphysical Grounding," *Hastings Center Report* 25, no. 7 (1995): 30–39; idem, "Hans Jonas's Exodus," 4–30.

Jonas's critique of nihilism is summed up in an article published in the journal of the Central Conference of American Rabbis in 1968.[62] In this article, Jonas claims that contemporary philosophy has no ethical theory because "philosophy has become a camp follower of Science." He characterizes modern thought as creating new concepts of nature and humanity as well as the fact of modern technology, supported by both. "All three imply the negations of fundamental tenets of the philosophical as well as religious tradition."[63] By "religious tradition," Jonas is referring to biblical/Jewish tradition which he believed has four essential principles: God created the universe; the universe is good; humanity is created in the divine image; and God makes known to humanity what is good. Vogel has argued that Jonas's metaphysics preserves the last three in his naturalistic metaphysics without the necessity of theology.[64] And although Jonas believed that theology was not necessary to answer modern nihilism, nonetheless the first tenet, that God created the universe, which does require a theological response, still answers certain basic human spiritual needs.[65] Jonas tried to create a theology which will be rational and in conformity with his existentialism, his metaphysics, and science as he understands it.

In modern nihilism the natural world is no longer the divinely created order, but is a mindless purposeless process determined by inherent law. The natural world is also no longer "good" in the biblical sense but is instead indifferent to the distinction between good and bad. It has no purpose, no values, goals, or ends.

In such a universe, humans are no longer created in the image of God. Darwinism has shown that the human species arose as the result of random forces: "He is an accident, sanctified merely by success."[66] In addition, historicism asserts that all human values are the product of each culture and therefore there are no universal or absolute truths, only relative and socially particular ethics. Lastly, psychology claims that all the "higher" aspects of the human character are really

[62] Reprinted in Yaffe, ed., *Jewish Environmental Ethics*, 250–63, and titled "Contemporary Problems in Ethics from a Jewish Perspective." Originally published in the *CCAR Journal*, January 1968, and then in *Philosophical Essays: From Ancient Creed to Technological Man* (1974; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 168–82.
[63] Yaffe, ed., *Jewish Environmental Ethics*, 250.
[64] Vogel, "Hans Jonas's Exodus," 19.
[65] Ibid., 36.
[66] Yaffe, ed., *Jewish Environmental Ethics*, 252.

gratifications of its base drives. "The higher in man is a disguised form of the lower."[67]

This reduction of the status of the human species creates the paradox of humans creating their own values through the use of their power, thus exalting themselves above any other creature or concern for the natural world while at the same time becoming the objects of their own use and abuse. Power becomes the only real human value with no outside or transcendent authority to check or control it. This power becomes implemented through modern technology.

For Jonas, modern technology is radically different from previous technology in principle and scope. Nature, now without meaning or value, becomes a mere object for the will of humanity. "The world then, after first having become the object of man's knowledge, becomes the object of his will, and his knowledge is put at the service of his will; and the will is, of course, a will for power over things."[68] This will for power now has no limits. "Some ineffable quality has gone out of the shape of things when manipulation invades the very sphere which has always stood as a paradigm for what man cannot interfere with."[69] There are moral implications in the loss of the sense of wonder and humility. Humans now become part of the same metaphysical devaluation that they have attributed to the rest of the world. Humans now also become the objects of scientific knowledge and technological power. The slow contingent processes of the natural world will be "replaced by fast-working accidents of man's hasty and biased decisions, not exposed to the long test of the ages."[70] Genetic engineering in which, for the first time, the engineer can "engineer the engineer,"[71] was for Jonas an example of the dangers of such a radically new view of humanity and the natural world. In such a view, people have no reason to care about future generations or the long-term fate of the world.[72]

Jonas's response to modern nihilism, the metaphysical basis to his imperative of responsibility, is to extend Heidegger's concept of existence to include all living organisms. Jonas does this by showing that all living creatures, from the smallest microbes to humans, show concern for their own being. They do this by connecting to the world around them in order to stave off death and non-being. Thus, even in the simplest organism, there is a kind of "inward relation to their own being."

[67] Ibid., 253.
[68] Ibid., 254.
[69] Ibid., 255.
[70] Ibid., 256.
[71] The phrase is taken from Leon Kass, *Toward a More Natural Science: Biology and Human Affairs* (New York: Free Press, 1985), 18. Kass is a student and disciple of Jonas. See his appreciation of Jonas in the special issue of the *Hastings Center Report* 25, no. 7 (1995): 3–12.
[72] Vogel, "Hans Jonas's Exodus," 9.

Jonas sees metabolism, the exchange of matter with the environment, which all organisms must exhibit in order to survive, as the most basic expression of that organism's struggle for life. This is what Jonas calls its "needful freedom." Each organism is free, in the sense that it consistently exhibits a dynamic unity beyond the sum of its parts, and yet it is dependent on constant exchanges with its environment in order to avoid dying.[73] With each new level of complexity in evolution there is an increase of mind, which brings a new level of freedom as well as an increased potential for pain and suffering. For example, all life requires nutrition and some kind of reproductive system. Animal life also has the capacities for movement, desire, and sensitivity to its environment that plants do not. These increased capabilities also create in animals the ability to feel pain, fear, and abandonment. With the arrival of humans in evolution, being becomes reflective and begins to try to understand its place in the universe. This is the source of the human anxieties of existence, unhappiness, guilt, and despair.[74]

Jonas wants us to understand that, by interpreting the facts of biology existentially and seeing the inherent value in the natural world beyond ourselves, we must ethically accept our role as the guardians and stewards of the natural world. This is the foundation of the ethical imperative of responsibility. If we believe this, then the future of humanity and the world matters. According to Jonas, our "first imperative" therefore is not to "ruin . . . what nature has achieved in him [humankind] by the way of his using it."[75] We must be cautious in our use of the world and pursue only modest goals.

> If the new nature of our acting then calls for a new ethics of long-range responsibility, coextensive with the range of our power, it calls in the name of that very responsibility also for a new kind of humility—a humility owed not like the former humility to the smallness of our power, but to

[73] Ibid., 66.
[74] Ibid., 70–14, 88–92, and Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 186.
[75] Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility*, 129.

> the excessive magnitude of it, which is the excess of our power to act over our power to foresee and our power to evaluate and judge.[76]

The world is not a mindless machine in which we are but cogs. Faced with this fact, we must respond ethically to protect the whole of life and not only ourselves. The anthropocentric ethics of previous ages are no longer good enough. The whole of the biosphere has become "a human trust" and therefore has a moral claim on us, not only for our utilitarian needs but also for its own inherent value. It is necessary to thus expand our ethical circle beyond the human good to the "good of things extra human" and include in the human good the imperative to care for them. "No previous ethics (outside of religion) has prepared us for such a role of stewardship—and the dominant, scientific view of *Nature* [italics in original] has prepared us even less."[77]

While Jonas spoke in the language of anthropocentric stewardship, Vogel feels that Jonas's metaphysics undercuts the distinction between anthropocentrism and biocentrism. For Jonas, living nature is a good-in-itself which therefore commands our concern and even our reverence. Since all organisms are vulnerable ends-in-themselves and they all express concern for their own existence, humans have a particular responsibility as moral agents to protect them. Our difference with the rest of nature is only in kind. Humans have continuity with the rest of life in that all of the biotic community shares life's goodness. This is regardless of whether other forms of life serve human needs. "So our self-respect requires 'cosmic piety' reverence for the whole of which we are part."[78] But as Vogel points out, Jonas was not only in the "camp" of biotic egalitarianism but also not in the camp of radical ecocentric holists because he believed that the human arrival in evolution "marks the transition from vital goodness to moral rightness: from desire to responsibility."[79] Nonetheless, there is no doubt that Jonas focused on the reality of human power and both the danger and the responsibility that can result from such power.

[76] Ibid., 21–22.

[77] Ibid., 8. See also 136–42.

[78] Vogel, "Does Environmental Ethics Need a Metaphysical Grounding," 37. See also Wolin, *Heidegger's Children*, 118: "One of the features that makes Jonas's approach to environmental ethics appealing and that distinguishes it from various trendy eco-fundamentalisms is that his strategy is both rationalist and anthropocentric."

[79] Vogel, "Does Environmental Ethics Need a Metaphysical Grounding," 38.

Since Jonas's philosophical program can be derived from the biblical/Jewish doctrines that God created the universe, that the universe is good, that humanity is created in the divine image, and that God makes known to humanity what is good, is there any need to ground Jonas's environmental ethic any further in Jewish sources? All of these concepts can be found in the first chapter of Genesis. The caretaker model perhaps needs no other text. Since, however, Jonas's emphasis is on the nature of human power and the responsibility that derives from that power, I believe that one other source can be useful in explicating the nature of human power. That text is Psalm 8.

Robert Alter called Psalm 8 a creation poem, an "[evocation] of the natural world as the embodiment of the Creator's ordering power and quickening presence."[80] Nahum Sarna referred to it as a philosophical psalm that is unique in the book of Psalms.[81] It speaks of the relationship between God and humanity and the relationship between humanity and the rest of creation. It is a meditation on the reality of human power over the rest of God's creatures.

The setting of the psalm is the poet standing outside and looking at the night sky filled with stars. The psalm begins and ends with the same phrase, "O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is Your Name throughout the earth!" This frames the psalm and sets the tone for the underlying paradox that amazes the poet: the insignificance of humanity before the power and majesty of God who has nonetheless granted humanity complete control over the other creatures of the world.[82]

Although in the Bible the sun, moon, planets, and stars are demythologized, they were not understood to be inert objects. They were angelic celestial beings with will and intelligence. So the psalmist shows amazement at the power of humans, which he characterizes as little less than the celestial creatures. Why should God have elevated such

[80] Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 117.

[81] Nahum Sarna, *Songs of the Heart: An Introduction to the Book of Psalms* (New York: Schocken Books, 1993), 50.

[82] The author of Ecclesiastes takes issue with Psalm 8's view of humanity: "I mused: 'God will doom both righteous and wicked, for there is a time for every experience and for every happening.' So I decided, as regards men, to dissociate them [from] the divine beings and to face the fact that they are beasts. For in respect of the fate of man and the fate of beast, they have one and the same fate: as the one dies so dies the other, and both have the same lifebreath; man has no superiority over beast, since both amount to nothing. Both go to the same place; both came from dust and both return to dust. Who knows if a man's lifebreath does sink down into the earth?" (Ecclesiastes 3:17–21).

lowly creatures to such heights of power? The lowliness of humanity is emphasized in the two words used in the psalm for humanity: *enosh* and *ben adam*. According to Sarna, both of these words indicate weakness. *Enosh* comes from a stem meaning weakness and frailty, and *ben adam* sounds like *ben adamah*, child of the earth.[83] And yet God has given humanity "glory and majesty" (*kavod ve-hod*), terms that are usually applied to God and the celestial creatures. The psalmist feels that God has granted to human beings an element of God's power and then he tells us what that power is. It is the power to control all the creatures of the lower world: all categories of animal life, both wild and domesticated, birds and fish. The psalmist recognizes that humans have the ability to catch, to kill, and to eat any other earthly creature.

This psalm speaks of the reality of human power and how that power sets us apart from all other creatures. It is the recognition of the effect we have had on every part of this world. There is no place and no creature that has not felt the presence of human power and it is naive of us to think otherwise. If Jonas's environmental ethic is about the nature of human power and its implications, then Psalm 8 is an ancient poetic expression of a similar concept.

3. *Leopold and Psalm 148; Jonas and Psalm 8*

Psalm 148 is the obverse of Psalm 8. Both are creations hymns in which the divine/human/nature relationship is considered. The Bible is a collection of sources and the book of Psalms in particular reflects a variety of voices. Both perspectives are part of the biblical view of the human relationship with the rest of creation. This relationship is neither anthropocentric or biocentric, it is theocentric. Nonetheless, the place of humans and human power is conceived of in very different terms in these two psalms. But they are not contradictory but rather complementary. Each poem emphasizes a different aspect of humanity. This dual nature of humanity was recognized also in rabbinic sources:

> "*Male and female He created them.*" (Genesis 1:27) Rabbi Joshua ben Rabbi Nehemiah said in the name of Rabbi Chanina ben Rabbi Isaac, and the Rabbis in the name of Rabbi Leazar said: He created him with four attributes of the higher beings [i.e., the angels] and four attributes of the lower beings [i.e., beasts]. The [four attributes of] the higher beings are: he stands upright, like the ministering angels; he speaks, like the ministering angels; he understands, like the ministering angels; and he sees, like the ministering angels. Yet does not a dumb animal see! But this one [human being] can see from the side. He has four attributes of the lower beings: he eats and drinks, like an animal; he procreates, like an animal; excretes, like an animal; and dies, likes an animal.[84]

[83] Sarna, *Songs of the Heart*, 62.

Jeremy Cohen has shown that for the authors of this midrash, human beings "are situated on a cosmic frontier, between supernal and terrestrial realms of existence."[85] Humans have divine characteristics which given them a measure of divine power, but humans are also creatures of bodily substance like any other creature.

Like Psalm 148, Leopold's land ethic is about the interconnectiveness of all life in one moral community and the ethical sentiment that arises from the recognition of belonging to that community. In Leopold, this interconnectiveness is derived from the common evolutionary origins of all living creatures and their ecological interaction with the environment. It is primarily a physical continuity that creates the biotic community. Like Psalm 8, Hans Jonas's environmental ethic is about the nature of human power and the responsibility that must derive from its use. In Jonas, while there is also physical continuity, the real connection to the rest of life is metaphysical: the existence of mind in every organism. Discontinuity comes from the ontological divide that occurs with the appearance of human sentience. For Jonas, this discontinuity does not separate humans from the rest of life; it creates an ethical responsibility to the lower forms of being.

A Jewish environmental ethic should express both the community model of Leopold and the caretaker model of Jonas, since both are necessary to express the dual nature of the human race in its relation to the rest of the natural world. In Genesis 2:15, the human is put into the garden "to till and to tend it." Calvin B. DeWitt has pointed out that the Hebrew word *le'ovdah*, which is translated as "to till" in the

[84] *Midrash Genesis Rabbah* 7:11. See also Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 38a: "Our Rabbis taught: Adam was created [last of all beings] on the eve of Sabbath. And why?...Another answer is: In order that, if a man's mind becomes [too] proud, he may be reminded that the gnats preceded him in the order of creation. Another answer is: That he might straightway go in to the banquet. The matter may be compared to a king of flesh and blood who built palaces and furnished them, prepared a banquet, and thereafter brought in the guests."

[85] Jeremy Cohen, "On Classical Judaism and Environmental Crisis," *Tikkun* 5, no. 2 (March/April 1990): 74–77, here 75.

New Jewish Publication Society translation of Genesis 2:15, and comes from the root *'avad*, has the dual meaning of the earth serving humans and humans serving the earth.[86] When two entities serve each other, that is a *con-servancy*. "We creatures, human and other, are creatures in relationship. It is a relationship in which we reciprocally serve each other."[87] Thus, while humans have the power to work creation for their own benefit, they must also act as the guardians of creation. Power to use creation is not absolute. While human beings cannot deny their power over the natural world and the changes that will come about through the exercise of that power, they must set limits to changes in kind and in scope. While humans play a unique role in the order of creation, they do not stand outside of that order. We are citizens and fellow members of the creation choir. It is time we heard the songs of the other singers, the outcry of mute things, "lest we perish together on a wasteland of what was creation."

[86] Calvin B. DeWitt, "Behemoth and Batrachians in the Eye of God: Responsibility to Other Kinds in Biblical Perspective," in *Christianity and Ecology: Seeking the Well-Being of Earth and Humans*, ed. Dieter T. Hessel and Rosemary Radford Ruether (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 291–316.

[87] Ibid., 302.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

JONAS, WHITEHEAD, AND THE PROBLEM OF POWER

Sandra B. Lubarsky

Hans Jonas was a fearless thinker, willing to entertain a whole range of possibilities, including ones so unpopular as to put his reputation as a philosopher of the natural sciences at stake. Two of these are the subject of this essay: his championing of subjectivity throughout nature and his bold theological speculation which strikes a blow to divine omnipotence. On both of these significant points, Jonas finds philosophical kinship with the thought of Alfred North Whitehead. Indeed, Jonas's affinities with Whitehead are several and important. They include the position that subjectivity is fundamental to the structure of reality, a mutual commitment to aligning science and human experience, an epistemological method that generalizes from human experience, and a shared conviction that power is relational.

Jonas pays tribute to "the great Alfred North Whitehead" at various points in his writing[1] and regards the "intellectual force and philosophical importance" of his philosophy as "unequaled in our time."[2] Jonas held Whitehead in high esteem, encouraged his graduate students to take up the study of his thought, and eagerly sought to deepen his own understanding of Whitehead's metaphysics.[3] He was clearly aware of the consonance between their philosophies; indeed because their philosophical sensibilities are in such accord it is fair to see Jonas as a process philosopher. In Whitehead, Jonas found a philosophy that resonated with his own intuitions regarding subjectivity, freedom, and the natural world.

[1] Hans Jonas, "Philosophy at the End of the Century," in idem, *Mortality and Morality: A Search for the Good after Auschwitz*, ed. Lawrence Vogel (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 41–55, here 48.

[2] Hans Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life: Toward a Philosophical Biology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966; Phoenix edition, 1982), 96.

[3] Strachan Donnelley reported that Jonas looked forward to reading each completed chapter of his dissertation on Whitehead, seeking to learn more about this philosophical system.

However, by the time Jonas came to a reading of Whitehead, he was so far along on his own philosophical journey that his reflections on Whitehead's thought are given mostly in footnotes and appendices, indicative both of Jonas's keenness to entertain Whitehead's ideas and his own well-trod philosophical path. Had Jonas encountered Whitehead's system earlier in his development, he may very well have found a way to solve two of his most intransigent problems: how to avoid psycho-physical dualism; and, theologically, how to conceive of God as a non-supernatural yet efficacious agent in the world. But Jonas's commitment to a particular understanding of power as coercive and dominating, made early and coloring much of his thinking, impeded him from giving full consideration to Whitehead's alternative understanding of internal relations or of God's power as persuasive. Thus, despite Jonas's extension of subjectivity beyond the bounds of human mentality, his insistence that human mentality is implanted in a physical body which is part of an ecological system, and his recognition that subjectivity is a non-physical yet effective force, he was unable to anchor his insights into subjectivity or to develop a post-Holocaust theology of divine action that does not violate the natural process of life. Still, Jonas was enthusiastic about Whitehead's thought and what follows is an examination of the interplay between Jonas's philosophy of power and his encounters with Whitehead. What is revealed is an example of noble philosophy, home to its own cogent authority but rooted in an honesty that values uncertainty over satisfaction and completion.

1. *Jonas on Existence and Power*

With important modifications, Jonas's philosophy is deeply influenced both by the existentialist assumption of human-world alienation and the not incompatible Darwinian claim that species survival involves ongoing struggle. "Existence," Jonas writes, "means resistance and thus opposing force."[4] Life involves resistance—against undifferentiated physicality, against necessity, against all that is not-self, even as these same adversaries are the blood relations on which life depends. Reality is best described as a relationship of polarities—between organic and

[4] Jonas, "The Concept of God after Auschwitz: A Jewish Voice," in idem, *Mortality and Morality*, 130–43, here 139.

inorganic matter, subjective interiority and mechanistic materialism, living being and dead matter, and freedom and necessity. Above all, reality is the polarity between being and non-being.[5] And this polarity is characterized by struggle, by effort and exertion, and by opposition.

> An identity that creates itself from moment to moment and continually reasserts itself, defying the leveling forces of physical sameness around it, is basically pitted against everything else. In the perilous polarization that emerging life takes upon itself, that which is not it and which borders from without on the area of its internal identity immediately takes on the character of absolute otherness. The challenge of selfhood qualifies everything beyond the boundaries of the organism as foreign and somehow oppositional: as "world"—in which, through which, and against which it must preserve itself. Without this universal opposition of otherness there could be no selfhood. And in this polarity of self and world, of inner and outer, which complements the polarity of form and matter, the underlying condition of *freedom* is potentially established, with all its daring and difficulties.[6]

The central ontological drama is the struggle between being and non-being and the ultimately tragic victory of non-being.

Throughout his writing, Jonas favors metaphors of resistance, offering both an ontological and a biological rendering of power relationships that support this metaphor. In the ontological, it is an image of being "wresting" itself from non-being; in the biological, it is the struggle of life against life. In both cases, there is an insinuation of violence in the scenario, with power as a causal force operating "over" or "against" the Other. For example, in his speculation about how life evolved from inorganic matter, Jonas poses a struggle between defiant organicity that (somehow) pulls away from primordial, undifferentiated matter and thus gains some degree of individuality, freedom, and inwardness. This "primordial act of separation"[7] imposes a state of ongoing anxiety and vulnerability to the pull of nonbeing (which ultimately triumphs). It requires unceasing commitment in the face of both an "indifferent universe" and "its ever-present contrary, not-being."[8]

[5] Hans Jonas, "Evolution and Freedom: On the Continuity among Life-Forms," in idem, *Mortality and Morality*, 59–74, here 62.

[6] Ibid., 68.

[7] Ibid., 61.

[8] Hans Jonas, "The Burden and Blessing of Mortality," in idem, *Mortality and Morality*, 87–98, here 90, 91.

The hard-won freedom of organic life from homogenous matter is seen as "an ontological revolution," accomplished by "the emancipation of form, by means of metabolism, from immediate identity with matter."[9] And even though Jonas argues repeatedly that primordial matter had within it the potential for organicity (otherwise, how would it have given rise to life?), he nonetheless remains fixed on a view of reality in which the polarity between being and non-being is never resolved and the primordial physicality of the world never decisively diminished. Indeed, though Jonas's overarching philosophical contribution is his ecological philosophy and the metaphysical interdependence this entails, his ontology nonetheless assumes an underlying dynamic of conflict, struggle, and, in regard to human life, alienation.

What kind of power is it that enables both the separation of being from non-being and the preservation and safeguarding of this identity? In his description of life's dynamic, Jonas writes, "An identity that creates itself from moment to moment and continually reasserts itself, defying the leveling forces of physical sameness around it, is basically pitted against everything else."[10] This ontological conflict recurs at the biological level in the "egoism of the species" and the "principle of existence": to eat and to be eaten.[11] On the topic of species survival, Jonas identifies power as "purposive causal strength," and he notes the superior power of bacteria and viruses over that of tigers, elephants, termites, and locusts, though all are "blind and unfree." Human power is different from that of other species in that it is freely and consciously directed; because of this, it knows no natural boundaries and hence stands in danger of obliterating the "symbiotic equilibrium" that exists in the struggle for existence. "Only in man is power emancipated from the whole through knowledge and arbitrary will and only in man can it become fatal to him and to itself."[12]

Jonas speaks of the superior power of human beings solely in physical terms and as a means for physical survival. He identifies power as "freedom of action," and says, "We witness growth in the extent and manner of impact on the world."[13] Again, that "impact" is assumed

[9] Jonas, "Evolution and Freedom," 66, 67.
[10] Ibid., 68.
[11] Hans Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 137.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Jonas, "Evolution and Freedom," 60.

to be physical and indeed, the overwhelming implication throughout Jonas's writings is that power is a force that acts *on* or *against*. Because Jonas's interpretation of power is "power over or against," in the face of human-caused ecological destruction he calls for "power over power," that is the power of self-restraint to be *imposed* by public policy.

In the picture Jonas draws of emergent life—of being struggling to differentiate itself from non-being—the power of self-determination is associated entirely with the power of resistance. This is made most clear in the course of Jonas's argument against divine omnipotence. He writes,

> Power, unless otiose, consists in the capacity to overcome something; and something's existence as such is enough to provide this condition. For existence means resistance and thus opposing force. Just as, in physics, force without resistance—that is, counterforce—remains empty, so in metaphysics does power without counterpower, unequal as the latter may be.[14]

For Jonas, power is relational. But because he sets up an ontology in which life fights unceasingly against the chokehold of materiality, the kind of relationship that exists is only of force against force.

2. *Jonas on Inwardness as a Dimension of Reality*

To his great credit, even as Jonas honors the "modern temper" and its desire for absolute immanence, he argues against unmitigated materialism. Jonas's position that subjectivity or inwardness is characteristic of the phenomena of life makes him a close companion with Whitehead and sets him in conflict with most other twentieth-century philosophers. Like Whitehead, Jonas argues that human experience must be the starting point of knowledge and what we know most intimately about human experience is that it involves subjectivity and inwardness. He is unwavering on the point that subjectivity and freedom are not unique to human life, though they find maximal expression at this level. The attribution of subjectivity to all forms of life is, he argues, the logical consequence of the theory of evolution.

For evolution destroyed man's special status, which had allowed for the Cartesian, purely physical treatment of the rest of the universe.

[14] Jonas, "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," 139.

The *continuity* of descent linking man with the animal world made it henceforth impossible to regard his mind, and mental phenomena in general, as the abrupt intrusion of an ontologically alien principle in the total stream of life. Man's isolation, the last citadel of dualism, disappeared, and he could once again use his knowledge of himself to interpret the totality of which he was a part. For if it was no longer possible to regard his mind as discontinuous with the prehuman history of life, then it was also no longer justified to deny the presence of mind in proportional degrees in his closer or more distant ancestors and therefore in *any* stage of animal life.[15] It is a point he makes again and again in the effort to persuade scientists and philosophers alike of its intellectual validity. Not only is Jonas's claim for subjectivity an argument for human continuity with life; it is also the basis of his case for the "dignity" of "the phenomenon of life as a whole" and is thus central to his ecological ethics.[16]

Jonas's commitment to a far greater range of psyche than is usually tolerated among philosophers of biology and scientists is most noteworthy. It is evidence of his deep dissatisfaction with the separation of human life from the companionship (and care) of life abundant as well as his allegiance to evolutionary biology. And, it is confirmation of his unshakable intellectual commitment to a method of inquiry that takes seriously the full experience of human life, body and mind.

There is nonetheless, some equivocation on Jonas's part over the degree to which subjectivity permeates the structure of reality. At times he distinguishes between organic and inorganic life, declaring subjectivity and freedom to be characteristic of the former and not the latter. Indeed, at one point, he sharply rebukes Whitehead's panpsychism, arguing bluntly for the separation of free beings from lifeless matter.

> The blurring of the difference between inanimate and animate nature, which the spread of inwardness down to the physical foundations entails, seems a high price to pay for the claimed atomicity of "actual occasions" which requires this universal inwardness to obviate their otherwise inevitable monadic isolation: the result is a submersion of discontinuity where it matters—between life and nonlife—against its injection where it is hypothetical—between phases of physical duration.[17]

[15] Jonas, "Evolution and Freedom," 62–63; see also Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 57.
[16] Ibid., 63.
[17] Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 96.

Jonas's brief comment on Whitehead's monism hardly does justice to the matter and in fact, in his later work on *The Imperative of Responsibility*, Jonas commits to a position that is close to Whitehead's. There he writes,

> Only the most exorbitant of metaphysical *ad hoc* assumptions . . . can make man a sole exception to the rule, if in all the rest of the living world the "subject" is nothing but an ineffective accompaniment and thus in its own testimony mere appearance. The status of subjectivity there must affect the status of human ends as well, and hence that of ethics. We shall see later that, in addition, it also affects "downwards" the question of purpose within nonconscious life and, still further down, in inanimate nature that is, in the world as a whole.[18]

More than once, Jonas proposes that subjectivity is present on the inorganic level *in potentia*—as "sleeping, not yet awakened freedom," and his final position seems to be closest to panpsychism, though he doesn't use this term.[19] But when he writes, "The 'soul' and hence the 'will' is vindicated as a principle among the principles of nature, and this without our having recourse to dualism (a recourse not quite as desperate as that to materialistic monism but still highly unsatisfying to theory)," the designation seems appropriate.[20]

But it is also fair to say that Jonas's panpsychism is, at times, half-hearted. This is most evident in his lengthy defense of the efficacy of subjectivity, given as an appendix to, and in support of, his argument for the pervasive presence of subjectivity. It is here that he falls back into the very trap that he aims to dismantle—the problem of psychophysical dualism—and thereby threatens his deep-seated commitment to universal subjectivity.

Jonas begins by making a "maximum concession to the materialist case," granting that materialism and determinism result in a useful scientific epistemology. It is not his goal to turn science upside down, but rather to show that the denial of subjectivity is unnecessary to the preservation of this epistemology and that its introduction into the natural order will not overturn the scientific method and its basic epistemology. He debunks the epiphenomenalist argument on both ontological and logical grounds and thereby makes the case for the efficacy of subjectivity. He rightly argues that subjectivity, to be real, must have

[18] Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility*, 63–64.
[19] Jonas, "Evolution and Freedom," 62.
[20] Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility*, 65.

the power to influence bodily activity and, through the body, the larger world. Having thus established the non-derivative reality of subjectivity, he offers several images for rethinking the problem of psychophysical interaction. The first is that of a geometric cone, standing upright on its tip, "in absolute, but absolutely unstable, equilibrium."[21] The slightest change could topple the cone, in one of an infinity of directions. Jonas argues that a psychic trigger would "computationally" make no difference in the overall "causal 'bookkeeping'" that would account for the physical behavior of the falling cone. Hence, non-physical impact on the physical world can occur without undoing the validity of physical law. But what if the slight intervention of subjectivity is neither a rare nor an incremental event? What if "the accumulation of the singly nonmeasurable must eventually grow into the dimension of the measurable" and thus clashes with the materialistic laws of physics? It is at this point that Jonas offers what he believes to be the "key to a solution of the psychophysical problem."[22]

> The key to a solution of the psychophysical problem... lies – so we suggest – in an age-old insight which has never been utilized in this connection: that our being *qua* subjects has this double aspect and consists of receptivity and spontaneity, sensibility and understanding, feeling and willing, suffering and acting—in brief: that it is passive and active in one.[23]

In effect, subjectivity is involved in a relationship of reciprocity with the world: "action *into* the world... is based on information, an input *from* the world." And this two-way relationship means that there is a "constant transfer and drain" from the physical order to the mental and vice versa so that "it is not unreasonable to assume that, in the physical average, outflow and inflow balance each other with reference to the whole phenomenon of subjectivity."[24] The mutuality that is entailed ensures both that subjectivity has causal power and that its reality is not ex nihilo, but the consequence of input from the physical dimension.

Finally, however, Jonas's thought experiment fails to yield a full-fledged solution to psychophysical dualism. Though he casts his experiment first in relation to mechanical physics and then in relation to quantum

[21] Ibid., 216.
[22] Ibid., 219.
[23] Ibid., 219–20.
[24] Ibid., 219.

physics, he ends with the same conundrum: How indeed does mentality interact with physicality and vice versa? His final conjecture is of a "mysterious switch... from mind to matter and from matter to mind" and a still-unattained theoretical model: "a *tertium quid*, neutral to the distinction of matter and mind, prejudging neither one in the image of the other, but able to account for a transmutation, conversion—or whatever be the dynamical mode of transition—among the two."[25] Descartes's pineal gland rears its ugly head.

Despite his most worthy demonstration of the too-easy consistency of materialism and its denial of the felt experience of subjectivity, Jonas admits to not knowing how the mind and body interact. What lies in his way is the assumption that subjectivity and physicality are substances—that even though some interdependence transpires between them, they are fundamentally separate and qualitatively different elements of reality. For example, in summing up his position he writes:

> With the determination of the body, which hence continues forth into the surrounding world, subjective purposes acquire an objective role in the fabric of events: that fabric, therefore, that is, physical nature, must have room for such interventions by a nonphysical agency. The long-held, would-be axiom that nature does on principle not allow this room is an overstatement of its determinism, which the most recent physics no longer shares.[26]

The suggestion here is that the basic fabric of physical nature makes a space for subjectivity to reside side-by-side, as it were, with it. Jonas's success lies in making a persuasive case for the legitimacy of mentality, for it being "as 'objective' a fact in the world as is that of things corporeal."[27] The rub is in the resiliency of the notion of mind as a "thing," different in kind than body, but nonetheless, a substance. Moreover, when Jonas speaks of the kind of causal efficacy that subjectivity has, he speaks in substance terms: power involves "visible and willed changes in the external world," and he postulates a model of "causal bookkeeping" that assumes a mechanistic input-output relationship between physical and mental events.[28] Psychic power then, functions on the model of physical power, pushing and pulling at the material world, drawing on its material resources and returning its yield to the

[25] Ibid., 230–31.
[26] Ibid., 64.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Ibid., 223.

physical world "where everyone can recognize it (for everybody knows that unthinking nature builds no cities)."[29] And so the mind-body problem persists and ontological dualism remains. How these two different substances interact, how the mind, as "a thoroughly different nexus of ontologically different elements within its own dimension," processes the continuous "input from the physical side," remains a mystery.[30]

But because Jonas is anything but one-dimensional in his thinking, the matter does not rest there. Having developed an argument against epiphenomenalism based on a model that he admits to be both crude and predisposed to the materialist case, he provocatively suggests that "the truth, I suspect, would look vastly different—not only more subtle but also framed in ontological terms which would alter our very speech of 'matter' and 'mind.'"[31] This comment is developed in a footnote of such import that it calls for a substantial reassessment of Jonas's previous representations of mind and matter. In it, Jonas makes clear his philosophical predilection for "the fullness of interpretation of all phenomena" over more limited logical coherence. He then refers to Whitehead's "radical conceptual reframing of ontology" which, although not without its inadequacies, is described as "an inspiring instance, the only one so far, of which I have in mind when, over against my feigned 'speculative model' framed in conventional terms, I surmise a truer one 'framed in ontological terms which would alter our very speech of 'matter' and 'mind.'"[32]

In Whitehead's metaphysical scheme, substances are replaced by experiencing events, all of which have both a mental and a physical pole or dimension. To be an occasion of experience is to have some degree of inner reality (or self-determining freedom); there are no "vacuous actualities," devoid of interiority. "Matter" and "mind" are not distinct substances and thus Whitehead's conceptual reframing overcomes psychophysical dualism.[33] Furthermore, Whitehead proposes

[29] Ibid., 220.
[30] Ibid., 221.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Ibid., 242.
[33] The world, to be sure, seems to be comprised of subjects and objects. There are beings, such as ourselves, that we know from within; most we know only from without. But some of these, for example higher order animals, also seem to experience subjectivity and evolutionary theology lends support to this. Both Whitehead and Jonas (most of the time) speculate that experience/subjectivity is universal—that to be is to be something, no matter how fleeting, insignificant, and unconscious, for oneself. Where they diverge is in regard to Whitehead's organizational dualism or his theory of aggregate societies. Experiential events come in all degrees of mentality but they also occur within various organizational structures and types of societies. A chair or a football has no dominant occasion, no centrally organizing experience, nor is there any reason to suspect that a tree does. But a human being, a cat, and a living cell do—that is, they seem to be "wholes." The Cartesian divide between thinking things and extended things is, from this perspective, a metaphysical mistake. Jonas recognizes this but does not find an adequate way to overcome it.
[34] Jonas, "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," 133.
[35] Ibid., 131.

that all actual entities are "subjects" in two ways: as self-experiencing subjects *of* their own becoming and, following upon their moment of full subjectivity, becoming subject *to* the next becoming occasion. The becoming subject *feels* the world in which it arises, internalizes it, and is to some extent formed by it; Whitehead thus speaks of internal relations and of "the many becoming one." Had Jonas pursued a full examination of Whitehead's ontology, he would have found decisive support for his commitment to subjectivity, a way to overcome psychophysical dualism, and a way to speak of the efficacy of subjectivity in relation to other beings. As it is, Jonas's appraisal of Whitehead's radical reconception conveys a sense of wistful longing in both its praise and its self-imposed restraint.

3. *Jonas on God*

Some of the same problems related to power are replicated in Jonas's discussion of the God-world relationship. The Holocaust, according to Jonas, calls "the whole traditional concept of God into question" and requires that "the believing Jew should explain to himself God's lordship."[34] Jonas is particularly focused on what he identifies as the "silence" of God during the Holocaust.[35] In other words, then, Jonas's post-Holocaust theology is a response to the traditional view of God—as omnipotent lord of history who could have intervened at Auschwitz, but instead, seems to have remained silent (that is, inactive). It is, as well, a theology constructed in accordance with the principle of "immanence," the idea that there can be no external interference into the lawful working of nature.

It might have been expected that Jonas would have developed a religious naturalism, given his philosophy of nature and his resolute commitment to subjectivity. Among Jewish thinkers, he might have

looked to Mordecai Kaplan in this regard and postulated a God who is *in* the world, but whose power is in keeping with natural processes. He might, as well, have turned to Whitehead for the development of a religious naturalism based on the dipolar nature of all of reality. Especially because Jonas believed the natural order to be infused with subjectivity/mentality/inwardness and hence neither mechanistic nor deterministic, he could have spoken of God-in-the-world the way other minds are in the world. His defense of subjectivity as well as his critique of omnipotence provide two separate avenues for arriving at a religious naturalism. Indeed, each alone would have sufficed. Why, then, does Jonas instead propose a theological picture in which God is absent from the world after creation, without independent power to participate in and influence life? Why, instead of a religious naturalism in which God is present in the world in a non-supernatural way, does Jonas propose a sort of theological epiphenomenalism in which God's activity is merely derivative, through humanity?

Part of the answer can be found in Jonas's steadfast understanding of power as physical and coercive. Despite his deepest intuitions about subjectivity, Jonas continues to interpret power solely in physical terms. Were, then, God to act *in* the world, the assumption of power as only ever physical demands the further assumption that divine power would necessarily undermine natural law and, because of its superior force, violate human freedom as well. For Jonas, Auschwitz provides evidence that God does not act this way and science furnishes reason to make such action undesirable. And so he casts God out of the historical realm, first limiting God's power and then going much further and declaring God "impotent." God's presence in the world is reduced to action-by-proxy via the hoped-for responsible behavior of human beings. In what follows, I offer support for this reading of Jonas's theological construction.

The background for Jonas's theology is an existential picture of being arising out of non-being, of "needful freedom" struggling to assert itself against its birthmother, materialism.[36] Biological existence is fraught with "a deep anxiety": "In its process, which must not cease, liable to interference; in the straining of its temporality always facing the imminent no-more: thus does the living form carry on its separatist existence in matter—paradoxical, unstable, precarious, finite, and

[36] Jonas, "Evolution and Freedom," 66.

in intimate company with death."[37] Indeed, Jonas faults Whitehead for giving insufficient weight to this anxiety, arguing that Whitehead's description of the process from concrescence (with its subjective satisfaction) to objective immortality (where the now-perished subject becomes an objective datum in the creative advance), hardly takes notice of the anguish of subjective passing. He mistakenly associates Whitehead with Hegel, reproaching them both for their inattention to the loss inherent in subjective perishing, asking, "Death, where is thy sting?"[38] Here Jonas errs in his assessment of Whitehead who is highly cognizant, throughout his metaphysical speculation (as well as through personal loss—his younger son was killed in combat in World War I) of the incessant and inevitable loss that is attached to impermanence. Indeed, according to Whitehead, "The ultimate evil in the temporal world is deeper than any specific evil. It lies in the fact that the past fades, that time is a 'perpetual perishing.'"[39] The agreement between Jonas and Whitehead on this matter is greater than Jonas appreciates. Both acknowledge that novelty arises at a cost, that organic life is less stable than inorganic existence; and that there are no guarantees that what emerges from either the process of evolution (Jonas's favored model) or the creative advance (Whitehead's model for the emergence of a concrete entity) is "better" than what was.

It is not so much, then, a difference in regard to death as it is a difference in regard to the coming-to-be of existence. For Whitehead, the process is one of "the many becoming one" and being "increased by one." This is the creative process which, in its unceasing rhythm, is without beginning or end. Jonas, in contrast, is wedded to a polarity between being and non-being and to a cosmology in which "to be" involves separation from a dim, undifferentiated state and a vigilant struggle against reintegration. Jonas points to

> the paradoxical fact that living substance, by a primordial act of separation, detached itself from the overall integration of things within the totality of nature, positioned itself vis-à-vis the world, and thus introduced the opposition between "being" and "nonbeing" into the indifferent assuredness of existence. Living substance accomplished this by assuming a relationship of precarious independence vis-à-vis that same matter which

[37] Jonas, "The Burden and Blessing of Mortality," 90.
[38] Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 96.
[39] Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, corrected edition, ed. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: Free Press, 1978), 340.

> is indispensable for its existence, and by distinguishing its own identity from that of its temporary material basis, which it shares with the entire physical world. With this dual aspect of metabolism its power and its need *nonbeing* entered the world as an alternative contained within being itself. Only then did "to be" take on an emphatic meaning: intrinsically qualified by the threat of its negation, being must now assert itself.[40]

Jonas draws a picture of the isolated individual in an indifferent world, struggling for survival. The objective world is not companion to the subject, but adversary and rival.

To this initial image is to be added Jonas's cosmogonic myth in which the world has been "left to itself" in order that it "might be, and be for itself"; "no uncommitted or unimpaired part [of the Divine] remained to direct, correct, and ultimately guarantee the devious working-out of its destiny in creation."[41] Such restraint is in keeping with what Jonas calls the "modern temper" and its demand for complete immanence. It is clearly in line with his own commitments to both scientific naturalism and existential alienation.

And yet, the becoming world is in a way the metabolic activity of God. It is God's most immediate environment, God's body, so to speak, and through its growth and change, God remains in relation to and is affected by the world. Indeed, God "progressively becomes different through the actualizations of the world process."[42]

But what kind of relation does God have to the world? Jonas's answer is confounding. His initial image of a creator God who renounced involvement in the world is followed by a discussion of a becoming God who cares about the world and suffers with it. "Bound up with the concepts of a suffering and a becoming God is that of a *caring* God—a God not remote and detached and self-contained but involved with what he cares for." And yet, he goes on to say, "But my myth stresses the less familiar aspect that this caring God is not a sorcerer who in the act of caring also provides the fulfillment of his concern: he has left something for other agents to do and thereby has made his care dependent on them."[43] In this context, Jonas's argument against divine omnipotence can seem redundant, but in fact it serves to underscore

[40] Jonas, "Evolution and Freedom," 61.
[41] Jonas, "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," 134.
[42] Ibid., 137.
[43] Ibid., 138.

what is at the heart of Jonas's theology: a particular understanding of power as coercive.

Jonas describes his critique of divine omnipotence as "the most critical point in our speculative, theological venture." "For the sake of any viable theology," he says, "we cannot uphold the time-honored (medieval) doctrine of absolute, unlimited divine power."[44] He then offers a convincing analysis of omnipotence as a "self-contradictory, self-destructive, indeed, senseless concept." Jonas assumes the Platonic idea that existence entails some degree of power. Power, then, is relational and thus has meaning only in a social construction of reality. An omnipotent subject would occupy a world devoid of other beings. Thus, omnipotence entails an absence of relationship even as it is intended as relational, and is therefore rendered meaningless. An "objectless power is a powerless power, canceling itself out: 'all' equals 'zero' here."[45]

Jonas offers another reason—this one theological, prompted by "reasons decisively based on contemporary experience"—to jettison the concept of divine omnipotence. In the face of evil, a claim of divine omnipotence imperils any claim for divine goodness. "Only a completely unintelligible God can be said to be absolutely good and absolutely powerful, yet tolerate the world as it is." God's "silence" during the Holocaust is to be understood not as a failure of divine goodness but as an absence of power. "Through the years that 'Auschwitz' raged, God remained silent....Not because he chose not to, but because he could not intervene did he fail to intervene."[46]

Jonas's arguments against omnipotence correspond sympathetically with those given by process thinkers who affirm the relational nature of power as well as the perfection of God's goodness. But there are several differences that are important to spell out in order to clarify Jonas's position and in order to develop the alternative theological options that are intimated but not developed in Jonas's thought.

First, Jonas assumes that the kind of relationship that power involves is a relationship of "over-against." Power is defined as "the capacity to overcome something" and it operates in and contributes to an environment of conflict and competition. It is when he writes about the concept of God after Auschwitz that he defines power as "the capacity

[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid., 139.
[46] Ibid., 139, 140, 141.

to overcome something" and existence as "resistance and thus opposing force." Second, Jonas assumes that power is almost always physically coercive power and moreover, destructive in nature. His comparison of metaphysical power with the way force is described in physics is instructive in this regard. "Just as, in physics, force without resistance—that is, counterforce—remains empty, so in metaphysics does power without counterpower."[47] Elsewhere, describing human power and its consequences for the biosphere, he notes that it is "eminently a power of destruction."[48] Third, there is an unspoken assumption that God's power is supernatural. (Indeed, it would have to be in order to create a world *ex nihilo*.) Were God to act in the world, it would be at the expense of the natural order and of human freedom. For Jonas, the absence of a salvific miracle that could have prevented the Holocaust lends support to his theory that God "for a time—the time of the ongoing world process—has divested himself of *any* power to interfere with the *physical* course of things."[49] What is striking here is the haste with which Jonas shifts from speaking against divine omnipotence to speaking of divine impotence. Can it be that behind this rapid progression is the assumption that God's power, regardless of quantity, is supernatural in quality and must therefore be eliminated? Having defined power as "the capacity to overcome something," Jonas makes the claim that "only to the physical realm does the impotence of God refer."[50] The implication seems to be that any involvement of God in the world would result in a subvention of natural laws and the autonomy of the world. Hence, God's previous "absolute sovereignty" is replaced by absolute impotence.

Jonas describes his efforts at developing a post-Holocaust theology as a "stammering" whose conclusions are the opposite of those arrived at by Job. Job "invoked the plentitude of God's power; mine, his chosen voidance of it."[51] In fact, Jonas's answer is much closer to Job's than he realized. In both cases, God's power is understood as the primordial power of creation, as supernatural, and as coercive. Indeed, it is because Jonas believes that this is the kind of power that God wields that he argues for the "voidance" of it. Were it to be exercised, it would wreak

[47] Ibid., 139.
[48] Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility*, 138.
[49] Jonas, "The Concept of God After Auschwitz," 141, my emphasis.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid., 142.

havoc on the world as described and understood by science. Despite his magisterial arguments against omnipotence, Jonas continues to harbor the expectation that were God active in the world, it would be as omnipotent lord, an image that cannot be reconciled with the Holocaust. Jonas continues to think of God's power as supernatural. Rather than fully reconstructing it, Jonas sequesters God, limiting God's influence on the world to the actions of humanity.

4. *An Alternative Theology*

Despite his best efforts to navigate between the theological shards of Auschwitz and the philosophical provocations of modern science, the consequences of Jonas's post-Holocaust theology is a disintegration of covenantal partnership. If God is without independent influence in the world, the covenant becomes uni-directional: the world effects God and God suffers because of the world, but the world is absent of divine redemptive action and entirely dependent on human decision. Indeed, he is not unaware of the unorthodox character of his theological position that "it is not God who can help us, but we who must help God."[52]

It is possible to end here, summarizing Jonas's theology as follows: The Creator God chose to create a world that would be absent of God's providence. God's direct, creative power ceased with the creation of the universe which, in its enormity, itself became the generator of an infinite array of possibilities. Given time and space enough—and these were exactly God's gifts—it was not inconceivable that life should emerge unplanned from the random variations of time and space. Indeed precisely in order to enable the creativity that might arise from randomness, God had to renounce God's power. Having done this and thus enabled the appearance of mind in the human species, the "destiny of the divine adventure" now resides with humanity.[53] This is the dominant theological narrative in Jonas's writings.

But another telling is possible, based on an undercurrent within Jonas's thought. In this account, God's activity within history and nature

[52] Hans Jonas, "Matter, Mind, and Creation: Cosmological Evidence and Cosmogonic Speculation," in idem, *Mortality and Morality*, 169–97, here 191.
[53] Ibid., 190.

is recognized as the central issue "which religious faith cannot let go of *on any account.*"[54] It is in his tribute to Rudolf Bultmann, "Is Faith Still Possible?," that Jonas raises the possibility that divine action could occur in ways that do not rupture established patterns of nature.

> The real question seems to me whether an intervention by God in the course of things, of which religion must speak, can *only* be represented as a "breaching," "piercing," "disruption" of the causal chain, that is, as a crude miracle; and whether Bultmann with the choice of these violent expressions has not posed an unnecessarily crass alternative.[55]

He then turns to the hallmark of his philosophy of nature: the existence of subjectivity within the natural world and writes,

> We must remind ourselves that the "miracle" of nonphysical intervention in the physical world, with no rending of its connectedness, thus without any miraculous quality about it, happens incessantly and as the most familiar of things, namely, each time when we *act* from conscious choice—which means nothing else but to codetermine, from our inwardness, the external course of things.[56]

Jonas harkens back to his earlier excursus on the power of subjectivity, again proposing that subjectivity has a power of its own, different from physical power but effective in and on the physical world ("On the Power or Impotence of Subjectivity"). Here he makes the additional suggestion that what is granted to human beings cannot be denied to God:

> The theologian... must tell himself that what is conceded to human action cannot be denied to divine action. If *we* can daily perform the miracle (and in some sense it *is* a miracle), with the choice of our souls, with our wishing and willing, our insights and errors, our good or evil aims—nonphysical, mental factors all of them—to intervene in and give *our* turn to the course of the world, then that kind of miracle that leaves the natural order intact should be possible also to God, although He may reserve such intervention for rare occasions and ends.[57]

Although Jonas uses the language of "intervention" and "miracle," his argument is based on the overall case he has made for subjectivity as a dimension of the natural order. And while he is torn about extending

[54] Hans Jonas, "Is Faith Still Possible? Memories of Rudolf Bultmann and Reflections on the Philosophical Aspects of His Work," in idem, *Mortality and Morality*, 144–64, here 154, my emphasis.
[55] Ibid., 153.
[56] Ibid., 156.
[57] Ibid., 157.

subjective efficacy to God, he nonetheless recognizes that once he has made way for the reality of subjectivity, he must allow for the possibility of divine action within the world.

Jonas is clearly apprehensive about this possibility, logical though it may be. And thus he adds the proviso that God may intervene only occasionally—and then, via a revelatory event that presents itself to the human soul.[58] Apart from these unusual moments, he advises that, "one should, perhaps, better not speak of this abstract possibility at all."[59] Partly his uneasiness is related to his assumptions about God's power, as indicated above. And partly (and related) it is a consequence of the fact that, despite his unremitting defense of subjectivity, Jonas never developed a full-scale explanation for mind-body interaction. Behind his use of the word "miracle" to describe the impact of mental decision on the physical world is the ongoing assumption of physical interaction, that is, of the external push and pull of one physical event against another. Jonas's speculations on subjectivity as causal remain tied to a model of power that assumes the physical process of "force-counterforce."[60] Surely, in such a construct, the efficacy of ideas or feelings would indeed be miraculous. And God's impact would indeed be perilous.

Jonas is not unaware of the way that Whitehead spoke about identity and relation; in fact, he offers a precise description and positive assessment of Whitehead's doctrine of internal relations in his "Note on Whitehead's Philosophy of Organism":

> endurance of existence [is replaced] by the transmission of characters from occasion to succeeding occasion: the latter inherits a past by appropriating the yield of the antecedent into its inwardness, and initiates a future by becoming inheritable itself when its own actualization is completed.[61]

Internal relatedness offers a model in which subjects interact through prehension (feeling) rather than brute force. Past events are formative but not determinative and power is relational, with the effectiveness of the past depending, to some degree, on the receptivity of the present. The causal past does not stand outside of the present but in-forms it,

[58] Ibid., 160, 161.
[59] Ibid., 160.
[60] Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 222.
[61] Ibid., 96.

that is, inheres in it as part of its identity. Thus the past—objective reality—is not necessarily at odds with the present, prevailing over it with thuggish force. Rather it is part of the creative process, constituting in part the subject that arises in relation to it.

In such a model, God is part of the environment in which a subject arises, part of the "many" that is available to the subject in its process of self-determination. God is not over-against and not destructive of independence (or rather inter-dependence), but acts as a lure, a persuasive influence. God's power, like the power of other minds (although magnified), affects the individual by being taken up into it, as it forms itself. The way God contributes to the arising occasion involves offering graded possibilities which influence, but do not determine, the subject's formation. The actual entity is not an "object" on which God acts; it is a subject to which God contributes (and which, after it becomes a superject or object itself, contributes to God).

Subjectivity requires that the past be inherited as other than an assault on the present. Likewise, it requires that power not be confined to physical force. Whitehead's notion of internal relations addresses both of these matters. The arising subject feels the presence of the past, now-objective world. It passes into the arising subject *as a feeling* (in Whitehead's terms, a "physical prehension"). To these feelings are added "conceptual prehensions" which are possibilities, enabling the subject to entertain "what could be" as well as "what is." In both cases, "feeling" is the operative mode, a way of experiencing the world that is not limited to sense experience, though it includes this. (Prehension is more fundamental than sense experience and it helps to account for those feelings that are unmediated by the senses, such as memory and, for higher organisms, our immediate experience of our bodies.) For Whitehead, the fundamental relationship between subjects is that of "feeling the feeling of others." Both physical and mental events are felt (though for Whitehead, there are no purely physical events; all events have both a mental and a physical pole) and thereby come to influence the becoming subject.

Jonas calls feeling "the mother value of all values," again recognizing the relationship between subjectivity and feeling.[62] Moreover, he tempers his theological claim about divine impotence by limiting it to "the physical course of things" and then by making the significant

[62] Jonas, "The Burden and Blessing of Mortality," 91.

assertion that God's presence is felt as "the mutely insistent appeal of his unfulfilled goal."[63] While Jonas does not clarify this assertion, its presence is indicative of his ongoing struggle to speak of the efficacy of subjectivity. It is redolent with the intuition that God is in the world, not as physical force but as felt presence, appealing to the world. The overlap here with Whitehead's doctrine of internal relations and the persuasive power of God is rather remarkable. Would that Jonas had turned to Whitehead's doctrine of internal relations and his conception of God's power as persuasive and thereby reinforced his own considerable insights into the ontological reality of subjectivity.

[63] Jonas, "The Concept of God After Auschwitz," 141.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

"GOD'S ADVENTURE WITH THE WORLD" AND "SANCTITY OF LIFE": THEOLOGICAL SPECULATIONS AND ETHICAL REFLECTIONS IN JONAS'S PHILOSOPHY AFTER AUSCHWITZ

Christian Wiese

From the time when I, myself, began to think, my relationship with Judaism has been of that ambivalent sort that generally characterizes the relationship that a modern contemporary Jew has to the Jewish heritage, at least if one does not simply abandon it and forget it. I was moved deeply by the Bible and, at the same time, not a believer. I no longer possessed belief in a personal God, the Creator of the Heavens and the Earth, who parted the Red Sea and thundered from Sinai, but I found that certain parts of the Bible included something that was enormously important for humankind and to which I continued to feel committed as inheritor. A central moment for me was the discovery of the ethos of the prophets. They are, from my point of view, the actual embodiment of the message of Judaism, which in its proclamation speaks to every present moment, and indeed almost always in opposition to that which dominates and is held for true. In that way, Judaism has contributed much to the forming of religious consciousness, and that has a future, whereas the idea that the fundamentalism of the new Orthodoxy rearing its head could prevail makes me feel queasy. I thus knew well the biblical tradition, and I was somewhat informed about the intellectual development of post-biblical Judaism, but I have never seriously studied Talmud, and what I did know about the further development of Jewish thought in the long history of the Diaspora was of a quite sketchy and general nature. I was somewhat better acquainted with philosophical developments in medieval Judaism—with Maimonides, Yehuda Halevy, Solomon Ibn Gabirol—and then, of course, with the history of modern Judaism: a history of emancipation, assimilation, and the acquisition of modern culture, which at the same time meant that one had to cast off the old. Against that I was protected by my Zionist belief, which, it is true, was primarily political in the Herzlian sense, but which also included for me the obligation to hold onto what has been inherited from Judaism. It was thus self-evident for me that I would have my young son circumcised. Nor was there even a moment's hesitation about raising our children with the consciousness of being Jewish and that they should, if possible, learn something about this heritage.

> Just how far belonging to Judaism is associated with my general view of the world has, though, always remained somewhat unclear to me. On the one hand, I took note of what modern science had to say about the world, while on the other hand, I was increasingly suffused with the binding character that the fate of the Jews [*Judenschicksal*] represented. But both existed alongside one another. The *sh'ma yisrael*, the "Hear, O Israel," always had a magical power for me. I still remember an inter-faith dialogue in New York in which they were dealing with the "Death of God theology" that was being discussed at that time in American Protestantism, and I said: "When I hear the *sh'ma* being recited, I still feel a shiver down my spine." But I would not have been able to say to whom I felt committed there. The personal definition of "God our Father" I could no longer properly comprehend—the reference to the faith of our forefathers is basically not sufficient. Much more important is the content of the matter itself: time and again I saw something singular, enigmatic, mysterious and binding in Jewish history and the coincidental belonging to this context of a Hans Jonas who was born in 1903 in an industrial city in the Rhineland—something that is even more profound and more final than my profession to Zionism. I could imagine revising my Zionism, but actually to break with the "*brit*"—the covenant between God and Israel—seems unthinkable to me, even if the concept of the divine partner in this covenant has remained completely nebulous to me. There is a mystery that binds all of us, beyond the time-bound, private, personal positions that we adopt intellectually and in our conscious acts.[1]

This telling passage from Jonas's *Erinnerungen* offers what is undoubtedly his most personal and unambiguous description of his relationship to his Jewish identity and to the Jewish religion. He did not shy away from voicing the deep ambivalence that he felt between a sense of Jewish belonging, doubts about fundamental elements of the Jewish religious tradition, and fascination in the face of the "mystery," which could not be grasped clearly, of transcendental reality. His confession to Judaism is characterized by an identity composed of elements of Reform Judaism (the emphasis on the prophets and the alienation from rabbinical Judaism), of a Zionist sense of belonging to a community formed by ethnic, cultural, and historical elements, including the experience of persecution and suffering (the *Judenschicksal*), as well as of a deliberate philosophical skepticism that reveals, at the same time, an underlying sense of mystery and even a yearning for religious meaning. Even if he was admittedly not at all a believer in the traditional sense, and

[1] Hans Jonas, *Erinnerungen*, based on conversations with Rachel Salamander, ed. Christian Wiese (Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 2003), 339–41.

even if he doubted or consciously rejected crucial aspects of Jewish religion, such as the authority of the Torah and the halakhic tradition, the alternative of atheism or even merely distancing himself from Judaism appeared unthinkable to him. Fundamentally, Jonas thus shared the ambivalence of many Jewish intellectuals in modern secular society and culture, who felt alienated from traditional Jewish beliefs and ways of life, but who nevertheless held onto some form of Judaism and creatively sought to develop their own form of Jewish identity and vision of the relevance of the Jewish legacy. In the case of Jonas, this search for Jewish identity is expressed in the motif of a "mystery," which for him points beyond the mere connotation of the "enigmatic" and "nebulous" to a dimension of transcendence that is awe-inspiring but at the same time subject to the responsibility of humans.

What does the quoted passage, formulated at old age, mean for the complicated question regarding the relationship between Jonas's Jewishness and his philosophical work?[2] As a Zionist, deeply committed to Jewish physical, spiritual, and cultural survival, and profoundly scarred and haunted by the Holocaust, Jonas throughout his life felt his deep rootedness in Judaism to be an important aspect of his personal and intellectual life. However, with regard to his philosophical work, things are less clear. His broad-ranging work is dedicated neither to the religious-philosophical interpretation of Judaism as a religious entity in general, nor determined by Jewish themes and motifs in the same intensity that one finds in the work of other Jewish thinkers. It is thus hardly possible to distinguish for Jonas between a general philosophical portion of his writings and an equally relevant "Jewish" portion. His ground-breaking book, *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age* (1984; the original German version was published in 1979 under the title *Das Prinzip Verantwortung: Versuch einer Technik für die technologische Zivilisation*), does not refer to his Jewishness at all; rather, as we will see, it excludes any religious element. His other monographs and essays deal with general religious-historical, philosophical, and ethical questions, whereas texts explicitly addressing themes of Jewish history, tradition, or religious philosophy are rather marginal in his published works—the one exception being his essay, "The Concept

[2] For as a comprehensive interpretation of this question, see Christian Wiese, *The Life and Thought of Hans Jonas: Jewish Dimensions* (Hanover, NH: University of New England Press, 2007). The following reflections are based on chapter 3 of that book.

of God after Auschwitz: A Jewish Voice" (first published in German in 1984 under the title *Der Gottesbegriff nach Auschwitz: Eine jüdische Stimme*), including the protracted process through which it emerged.

Jonas rightly would have denied being a "Jewish philosopher," not only because he feared that such a label would situate his philosophy and the ethics he formulated for a global technological civilization in a particularistic Jewish canon, thus limiting its persuasive power as a universal philosophical approach. Rather, his philosophical ethos demanded that reason take unconditional precedence over any kind of personal religious ties. He was wholly convinced that, in an age divested of theology and religious belief, his most important concern—promoting the necessity of humankind's collective responsibility for the future of endangered life on this planet—be founded in compelling and universal terms, without reference to religious or theological categories, lest it appeared as dogmatic or irrelevant.

Jonas's own definition of his relation to Judaism, formulated in a conversation with Herlinde Koelbl, provides a most impressive description of the intense, ambiguous interaction between Jewish identity and his search for universal validity as a historian of religion and philosopher. In this interview he explained that, despite a certain distance from traditional forms of Jewish identity, he had "maintained an affirmative relationship . . . to the essential content of Jewish tradition" and felt himself especially drawn to the "biblical word." "The one God, the chosenness of Israel, the ethos of the prophets: Yes! But of course no Orthodox rabbi can view this 'yes' as sufficiently Jewish." Even if he "had ultimately adopted a philosophical position of atheism," which he denied, Jonas understood the legacy of Judaism, which had for "thousands of years" been "handed down from generation to generation with so much tenacity and suffering," as personally and intellectually binding:

> That is a community of fate, an affiliation which cannot be arbitrarily dissolved. One may not allow the chains to be torn off. There is indeed something special about the Jews. It is surely a puzzling phenomenon that we exist and introduced monotheism into the world, that we were its witnesses and its bearers and have continued to work at it—our significant minds and also the insignificant ones. No single generation has the right to simply allow such a chain to be torn off. No, not a one.

To assess the meaning that Jonas's confession of loyalty "to this ancient community with its great and terrible history and its intellectual legacy" has for his ethical philosophy, one must attend to his concurrent assertion

that, according to his deepest conviction, "something" remained "in permanent tension with all of that"—"and that is philosophy."

> The philosopher must perform his actual task, that of thinking, wholly independent of such ties and inherited assumptions. He is obligated solely to thinking. In terms of method, philosophy must be "atheistic." That does not mean dogmatically asserting "there is no God." But it means not allowing one's views to be dictated by matters of faith. To be a philosopher and Jew at one and the same time—this implies a certain tension. There is no question about that. Now, my chosen profession really was philosophical reflection, which means that one cannot permit anything to stand which is not validated by the means of knowledge provided by philosophy itself.[3]

This clear distinction between Jewish identity and philosophical work has certainly to be taken seriously. The confession of a "methodological atheism," by which Jonas sought to counter the suspicion that he permitted his philosophical inclination "to a metaphysics with rather theistic assumptions" to be "furtively informed" by his "Jewish presuppositions,"[4] seems at first glance to confirm Vittorio Hösle's view that Jonas only "appended" a (Jewish-) theological dimension to his ethical theory of responsibility in a later phase of his work.[5] In this case it would be worth asking how this "appending" came about, what motivated it, and what function and meaning it has for his entire oeuvre. Jonas's own testimony, however, seems to point to a far more complex relationship between the philosophical and the Jewish component in his thought, one that cannot simply be defined chronologically in terms of a succession of subsequent phases of his work, but which rather overdetermines his entire work. It is more than revealing that Jonas speaks of an—apparently constant—"tension" between both dimensions without dissolving it, simply embracing a philosophy of reason and hence wholly denying the relevance of his being Jewish. Precisely the idea of a "tension" that points to different poles of his identity and thought, and the phrase "philosopher and Jew *at one and the same time*" ["*zusammen* Philosoph und Jude"], which suggests precisely not a dichotomy, but rather a differentiated interplay between both poles,

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[3] Interview with Hans Jonas, in Herlinde Koelbl, *Jüdische Portraits. Photographien und Interviews* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1998), 166–71, here 171; all previous quotations, see 170–71.

[4] Ibid., 171.

[5] Vittorio Hösle, "Ontologie und Ethik," in *Ethik für die Zukunft: Im Diskurs mit Hans Jonas*, ed. Dietrich Böhler (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1994), 104–25, here 115.

offers a point of entry for an attempt to trace the Jewish dimension in his biography and his work without thereby classifying him as a "Jewish philosopher." The latter would certainly force him into a trajectory he would not have recognized as his own, but ignoring the strong impact of the Jewish dimension would be equally inappropriate. It seems, best, therefore, to speak of a *polarity* of both elements, even if Jonas undoubtedly laid different emphasis on both poles and—as implied by the ordering of the terms in the phrase "philosopher and Jew at one and the same time"—gave precedence to philosophy.

Despite his reluctance with regard to the use of Jewish tradition in his philosophical work, Jonas did not completely refrain from including such elements when it came to expressing aspects of his philosophy and ethics, which were less visible and explicit elsewhere in his writings. The path of his thought led him from the history of religion in antiquity and German existentialist philosophy through an anti-existentialist ontology of the organic to the ethics of ecological responsibility in the age of technology, and eventually to an interpretation of the *conditio humana*, and even the *conditio divina* after Auschwitz.[6] A deeply influential, sometimes more and sometimes less subterranean theme running through all stages of his work is his unrelenting intellectual struggle with the question of what constitutes the essence of human and of natural existence in a world conceived of as "creation" and as the object of human responsibility—a responsibility demanded by the "sanctity of life," regardless of whether one understands it in a religious or a secularized sense. This fundamental aspect of his philosophy then inevitably raises the question of God. The question of God, however, must be accounted for in the face of the modern undermining of all metaphysics and in the face of Auschwitz, which seems to relegate all reflection on the divine to the realm of the ineffable and inconceivable.

It is true that Jonas did with some justification emphasize the ruptures between his activity as a historian of religion during the Weimar Republic and his philosophy after 1945.[7] This does, however, not exclude

[6] See Lawrence Vogel, "Hans Jonas's Exodus: From German Existentialism to Post-Holocaust Theology," in Hans Jonas, *Mortality and Morality: A Search for the Good after Auschwitz*, ed. Lawrence Vogel (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 1–40.

[7] See "Der ethischen Perspektive muss eine neue Dimension hinzugefügt werden: Hans Jonas im Gespräch mit Mischka Dammaschke, Horst Gronke, und Christoph Schulte," in *Ethik für die Zukunft: Im Diskurs mit Hans Jonas*, ed. Dietrich Böhler (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1994), 34–47, especially 36.

the possibility of placing greater weight than was done previously on the meaning that his early studies of the Gnostic views of existence, the world, and God have for his later work. One of the *leitmotifs* of his philosophy no doubt emerges in his turn against all nihilistic negation of the world, against all escapism, as well as in his intellectual struggle to "oppose Gnostic thought as the fundamental signature of the era."[8] The claim for a deep inner coherence in Jonas's thought between his interpretation of Gnosticism, his philosophy of life, his ethos of responsibility, and his search for a spiritually and rationally acceptable concept of God after Auschwitz rests on the assumption that it was, above all, the traumatic experiences of the twentieth century that left their mark on Jonas.[9] They instilled in him the imperative to present as a diagnosis the radical endangerment of life in the earth's ecosystem and to propose and philosophically ground a new, universally plausible system of ethics as the answer to the unprecedented challenges of the present. The language of religion (and the language of Judaism) which Jonas drew upon in his theologically-inspired writings, and which provided the metaphors by which he invested his ethical philosophy with utmost urgency did not appear only late in life. On the contrary, they constitute an underlying element of his "secular" philosophical arguments, while nonetheless remaining deeply informed by his rational ethos. Such images, myths, and religious concepts, it will be shown, are indebted to that pole of his thought whose significance—in various degrees of intensity—rested upon Jonas's continual bond with Judaism and with the ethical substance of the Jewish tradition, which had an authority for him that transcends simple notions of secularization.

I

In his lecture, *Philosophy at the End of the Century: A Survey of its Past and Future* ("Philosophie; Rückschau und Vorschau am Ende des Jahrhunderts"), delivered in 1992 in Munich, Jonas pointed to the inner coherence between his philosophy of biology and his ethics of responsibility

[8] Micha Brumlik, *Die Gnostiker: Der Traum von der Selbsterlösung des Menschen* (Berlin: Philo, 2000), 274. On the close relationship among the various phases of Jonas's work, see also Willi Oelmüller, "Hans Jonas: Mythos—Gnosis—Prinzip Verantwortung," in *Stimmen der Zeit* 206 (1988): 343–51.

[9] See Wiese, *The Life and Thought of Hans Jonas*, 87–149.

for the future, stressing that in view of "the lightning flashes of an approaching storm," originating in humankind's behavior, the "reconciliation between our presumptuous special status as humans and the universe as a whole, which is the source of our life, is becoming a central concern of philosophy."[10] Man, although an animal of nature, has become the greediest of all creatures and must, to the degree that it becomes apparent that he has disabled the previous mechanisms for achieving balance within the ecological system, assume responsibility for the survival of the whole. "As we awake from a hundred years of technology's blithe plundering of the planet and its triumphant celebration of its successes, its utopian dreams of happiness for the entire human race," Jonas continued, with clear reference to the language of the theology of creation,

> we are discovering a previously unsuspected tragedy in the gift of the sixth day of creation as reported in Genesis: the granting of self-consciousness and intellect to a creature of physical needs and drives. Nobility and doom join hands in the human intellect, which taken by itself raises the human being into the realm of metaphysics but becomes, in its practical application, the instrument of extremely brutal biological success. In itself the mind represents the fulfillment of human destiny; around itself it spreads destruction.[11]

In reflections like these, Hans Jonas, who—like only a few other thinkers of the twentieth century—gave expression to a sense of how endangered nature and humankind have become because of the long-term effects resulting from technological interventions in the system of life on the planet, formulated, as it were, his philosophical legacy. This legacy can be characterized as an impassioned plea for human responsibility for that which Jonas called, in various contexts, "the creation," thus invoking religious-philosophical connotations or at least referring to a theological code with ethical implications, among them the metaphor of human stewardship of God's created world. Explicitly, this recourse to a terminology of creation is also found in the last words he spoke in public before his death, at the end of his lecture on "The Outcry of Mute Things" in Udine:

[10] Hans Jonas, "Philosophy at the End of the Century: Retrospect and Prospect," in *Social Research* 61 (1994): 812–32; reprinted in Jonas, *Mortality and Morality*, 41–55, here 51.

[11] Ibid., 53–54.

> It was once religion which told us that we are all sinners, because of original sin. It is now the ecology of our planet which pronounces us all to be sinners because of the excessive exploits of human inventiveness. It was once religion which threatened us with a last judgment at the end of days. It is now our tortured planet which predicts the arrival of such a day without any heavenly intervention. The latest revelation—from no Mount Sinai, from no Mount of the Sermon, from no Bo (tree of Buddha)—is the outcry of mute things themselves that we must pull together in curbing our powers over creation, lest we perish together on the wasteland of what was creation.[12]

It is no coincidence and certainly not without significance that the philosopher takes recourse here in concepts like "revelation" and "creation," which embody, from his point of view, the essence of the Jewish-Christian tradition, its inextinguishable religious and moral substance. As a central element of Jewish (as well as Christian) theology, the motif of "creation," which—together with its implicit accent on humanity's task to respect the integrity of all created things—recurs in Jonas's work repeatedly, is among the decisive aspects of his philosophical approach. In ethical terms, this theological reference aims, for Hans Jonas, specifically at the concept of "sanctity" or "sacredness" of life. In his late reflections on "Matter, Mind, and Creation," he therefore cites as an underlying motif of his philosophy the Jewish liturgical title for God, *rotzeh ba-hayyim*—"He who wills life." Corresponding to this, on the human side, is the freedom and responsibility of the creature to respect the dignity and integrity of all natural life and to resist its destruction.[13] Jonas views this element of Jewish tradition, which Christianity has also embraced—thanks to the Jewish element underlying its core—as an essential aspect of its own faith, thus incorporating it into Western philosophy, as Judaism's most precious legacy for the epoch of technological-ecological crisis.

At first glance, the "theological" or "religious-philosophical" language of Jonas's last lecture appears to stand in a conspicuous tension with the argument Jonas developed in his extraordinarily influential ethical masterpiece, *The Imperative of Responsibility*, which sought to provide the philosophical foundations for a determined moral response to the ecological crisis of the twentieth century. Facing the rise of a global

[12] Hans Jonas, "'The Outcry of Mute Things.' Lecture in Udine (30 January 1993)," in Jonas, *Mortality and Morality*, 198–202, here 201–02.

[13] See Hans Jonas, "Matter, Mind and Creation: Cosmological Evidence and Cosmogonic Speculation," in Jonas, *Mortality and Morality*, 165–97, here 190.

technological society that clearly had the potential to damage irrevocably the conditions of life for future generations or even to destroy humankind's very foundation within the natural world, Jonas sought to provide nothing less than a profound and far-reaching revision of the meaning and validity of the traditional concept of ethics. Unfortunately, Hans Jonas's diagnosis of the present, his complex theoretical reflections on the "ethical metaphysical query about an ought-to-be of man in a world that ought to be,"[14] and his later substantial contributions to the realm of medical practice and bioethics, which is so central to contemporary ethical discourse,[15] cannot be explored in greater detail in this context. The inner thrust of his argument, nonetheless, can be characterized as an attempt to draw the ethical consequences from his earlier philosophical speculations about organic life and to establish a profound metaphysical foundation of the inherent objective value of life. Only on this basis, he argues, by answering the question why life ought to be, can philosophy really make a compelling case for an attitude of awe and responsibility.

One aspect that is of crucial importance for the relationship between philosophy and Judaism in Jonas's work is the question of how to counter nihilism. In his *Imperative of Responsibility*, he raised the question of the "ethical vacuum" produced by modern science and the way it neutralized the value of life, to the extent that now "we shiver in the nakedness of a nihilism in which near-omnipotence is paired with near-emptiness." In this context he indicated that it appeared to him to be questionable, "whether, without restoring the category of

[14] Hans Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 50. For the ontological grounding of the *Imperative of Responsibility*, see, e.g., Wolfgang E. Müller, *Der Begriff der Verantwortung bei Hans Jonas* (Frankfurt am Main: Athenäum, 1988); Gilbert Hottois and Marie-Geneviève Pinsart, eds., *Hans Jonas: Nature et responsabilité* (Paris: Vrin, 1993); Bernd Wille, *Ontologie und Ethik bei Hans Jonas* (Dettelbach: Röll, 1996); Frank Niggemeier, *Pflicht zur Behutsamkeit? Hans Jonas' naturphilosophische Ethik für die technologische Zivilisation* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2002); Nathalie Frogneux, *Hans Jonas ou la vie dans le monde* (Brussels: De Boeck Université, 2000). For a critique of Jonas's theory of responsibility, see Dimitri Nikulin, "Reconsidering Responsibility: Hans Jonas's Imperative for a New Ethics," *Graduate School Philosophy Journal* 23 (2002): 99–118; Richard J. Bernstein, "Hans Jonas: Rethinking Responsibility," *Social Research* 61 (1994): 833–52.

[15] See the strongly relevant contributions in Hans Jonas, *Technik, Medizin, und Ethik: Zur Praxis des Prinzips Verantwortung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1985); and see Dietrich Böhler, *Verantwortung für das Menschliche und die Ethik in der Medizin: Hans Jonas-Gedenkvorlesung*, ed. Andreas Frewer (Erlangen: Palm & Enke, 1998); Sebastian Poliwoda, *Versorgung von Sein: Die philosophischen Grundlagen der Bioethik bei Hans Jonas* (Hildesheim: Olms, 2005).

the sacred, the category most thoroughly destroyed by the scientific enlightenment, we can have an ethics able to cope with the extreme powers which we possess today." On the other hand, he consciously sought to justify his ethics of the future without recourse to any theological argumentation, since he was aware of the fact that increasing secularism would undermine seriously any ethical approach based on religious categories. "However, religion in eclipse cannot relieve ethics of its task; and while of faith it can be said that as a moving force it either is there or is not, of ethics it is true to say that it must be there."[16] There is much to support the idea that in the *Imperative of Responsibility* Jonas endeavored to develop a universally plausible ethics for a global secular society and to produce a rational "ultimate justification" of the obligation to responsibility—especially since he was acutely aware of the dwindling trust in the twentieth century in self-evidence and ethical relevance of the religious dimension. He wanted to avoid the risk of his project being branded a "Jewish ethics" and thus having its breadth of influence impaired. At the same time, it was also part of his philosophical ethos not to withdraw to a position that would adopt the cloak of unassailability, since the position was indebted to a religious commitment. Further, Jonas's approach to ethics appears to be part of his struggle against the temptation of nihilism: If he denied the existence of a benevolent God whose creatures are human beings, the nihilist could observe the self-destruction of the human species with indifference or fatalism. In an unpublished lecture on the subject "How can we justify our duty to posterity and the Earth independently of belief," Jonas outlines how this position becomes conceivable:

> But someone can come along and say that man, this creature with such a dubious track record, which now even endangers everything else, is not worth preserving. Meanwhile the rest of Nature, which until now has brought forth its bounty without regard to choice or value and has time and again left vast swathes of it to fall by the wayside in order to make way for new forms, will outlive humans too, along with the devastation they have wreaked, and in its own time (of which it has a great deal) it shall fill in the gaps with new creatures just as blindly and unconcerned.[17]

[16] Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility*, 22–23.

[17] Hans Jonas, "Wie können wir unsere Pflicht gegen die Nachwelt und die Erde unabhängig vom Glauben begründen?" (Hans Jonas papers, Philosophical Archives of the University of Konstanz, HJ 5–9–5, 4f.)

However, Jonas disputed the idea that only the belief that nature and humanity had been created by God, and that man had been appointed the guardian and custodian of creation, could justify the imperative of responsibility. For him, it is possible to separate "the question of the ought-to-be [*Seinsollen*] of a world"

> from any hypothesis about its authorship, with the assumption that even for a divine creator, such an ought-to-be was, according to the concept of Good, the reason for his creating: he wanted it because he thought that it should be. Yes, it can be asserted that the perception of value in the world is one of the motives for concluding that there was a divine author and not, conversely, that the anticipation of the author is the reason to assign value to his creation. Our argument is thus not that metaphysics had to take on a role only with the dwindling of belief, but that this duty always belonged to it, and it alone—under the conditions of belief as well as of unbelief, whose alternative does not affect the *nature* of the task at all.[18]

From Jonas's point of view, the existence of God is thus not decisive for ethics, since a "commanding will" emanates also "from the immanent claim of something good-in-itself to its reality."[19] Thus the ontology of nature and the command that follows from it—that is, humans limit themselves—can be justified alone on the basis of reason and insight into the inherent value of life. Against this background, Jonas hoped to establish a nonreligious foundation for the "sanctity of life," which would be convincing for the secular world, so that in his reflections on the risks of biogenetics, he calls for humankind to learn once more "fear and trembling...and, even without God, awe in the face of the sacred."[20]

However, in spite of this secularization of the concept of the "sanctity of life," there is much evidence that the question of God and the resulting anthropological and ethical issues which that question gives rise to concerned the philosopher intensively at least from the 1960s on. Even before his public expressions on the religious implications of the Holocaust, Jonas developed perspectives of his ethical thinking with recourse to elements of Jewish tradition. The motif of the "createdness" (*Geschöpflichkeit*) of all life, which holds within it the call to respect the

[18] Ibid., 6–7.
[19] Ibid., 9.
[20] Hans Jonas, "Mikroben, Gameten, und Zygoten: Weiteres zur neuen Schöpferrolle des Menschen," in Hans Jonas, *Technik, Medizin, und Ethik*, 204–18, here 218.

integrity, freedom and dignity of all life, played a decisive role here. The theological reference to the creation and the "sanctity of life" does not represent an afterthought that appeared only at a later stage in his work, but was present from the very beginning. However, Jonas evidently de-emphasized it in the course of presenting his model of an autonomous ethics for the future, in order not to endanger its universal plausibility. To put it another way: Jonas's metaphysics offers a non-theological interpretation of the idea of creation in the Judeo-Christian tradition. In secularizing the concept of creation, Jonas proceeds from the premise of an inner teleology of evolution that imposes irrefutable values on any moral being. If this assumption is correct, then we are justified in offering an interpretation that gives more weight to the religious dimension and the role of Jewish tradition in Jonas's ethical thinking than has been done so far.

The correspondence, however aporetic, between rational philosophy and Jewish elements in Jonas's ethics can be seen most impressively in his use of the concept of man as the "image of God." In a response to *The Imperative of Responsibility*, his Jerusalem friend Ernst Simon, who considered it a "superbly written" book, wondered about Jonas's "untroubled use of many religious formulations, e.g. divine image [*göttliches Ebenbild*]," which, he felt, contradicted his programmatic nonreligious approach.[21] In his response, Jonas conceded that there was a certain tension inherent in his "symbolic" use of religious terms in his ethics, but pleaded for preserving the relevant philosophical meaning of the legacy of religious language while secularizing such concepts:

> Finally, on your question about the use of religious formulations, e.g., "image." That I, for my part, am a believer, may explain this inclination,

[21] Ernst Simon to Hans Jonas, August 7, 1980, Hans Jonas papers, Philosophical Archives of the University of Konstanz, HJ 7–3–16. Simon refers to the following passage: "We have intimated before that religious belief has answers here which philosophy must still seek, and must do so with uncertain prospects of success. (E.g., from the 'order of creation,' faith can argue that the whole order should exist inviolate.) Faith in revealed truth thus can very well supply the foundation for ethics, but it is not there on command, and not even the strongest argument of need permits resorting to a faith that is absent or discredited. To be sure, here too, a tenable metaphysics can no more be conjured by a bitter need for it than can religion, but the need for it at least can move us to search after it; and for the search to be unprejudiced, the worldly philosopher struggling for an ethics must first of all hypothetically allow the *possibility* of a rational metaphysics, despite Kant's contrary verdict, if the rational is not preemptively determined by the standards of positive science" (Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility*, 45).

> but cannot philosophically justify it, since philosophy precisely as I understand it must proceed on the basis of disbelief. However, it is itself a philosophical insight that no "secularization" may go so far that we forfeit the awareness or intuitions of transcendence which religion has made accessible and from which an inalienable content can be salvaged into the post-religious perspective. For these, the biblical forms or images, provided they are still familiar, can serve as symbolic shorthand, and imago Dei is such a symbol. I can, of course, be reproached from both sides *that I want to have the best of both worlds* [English and emphasis in the original] and that I avoid the Either/Or [problem]. Be that as it may. As an antiradical, I don't believe in the Either/Or anyway.[22]

By confessing, in this private letter, to be a "believer" with a personal inclination to use theological language, and at the same time attributing to philosophy the role of "secularizing" that language for the sake of intellectual honesty, Jonas clearly expresses the characteristic polarity of Athens and Jerusalem in his thinking. While the accent is on the "post-religious perspective" which alone, in his eyes, guarantees philosophical plausibility, the potential loss of the language of religious tradition in a secular world seems to signify not merely an unfortunate but a dramatic development with fateful consequences for human self-understanding in modern society. Insisting on the necessity to embrace "the best of both worlds," Jonas situates his own ethical approach within the forcefield of an ongoing debate about strongly contested fundamental questions in moral philosophy and Jewish as well as Christian thought.[23] Can or should contemporary discourse on ethical values be completely dissociated from religion? Does the abandonment of heteronomy to the transcendent, of obedience to something outside of oneself, inevitably lead to an ethical vacuum? Or is it possible—and necessary—for modern ethics to be secular, immanent, and autonomous? As we have seen, Jonas affirms the latter, without being willing to dismiss the "inalienable content" of religious metaphors. Instead, he seeks to rescue these metaphors, employing them as a "symbolic shorthand" for the existence of a "sacred" dimension of life, which can make a compelling case for an ethics of responsibility even without anchoring

[22] Hans Jonas to Ernst Simon, February 7, 1981, Hans Jonas papers, Philosophical Archives of the University of Konstanz, HJ 7–3–16.

[23] Among the abundance of literature about these questions, see, e.g., the recent reflections by Jürgen Habermas, *Religion and Rationality: Essays on Reason, God, and Modernity* (Oxford: Polity Press, 2002); Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Religion*, ed. and with an introduction by Gil Anidjar (New York: Routledge, 2002).

it in the notion of transcendence or in any "positive religion," that is, Judaism or Christianity.[24] The question is whether this procedure is just a rhetorical figure, a symbolical use of religious and metaphors images aiming at enacting secularization, while limiting the loss that secularization entails, or whether still another layer is concealed, as it were, behind the "methodological atheism" implied in this metaphorical use of language, a layer that would suggest a stronger impact of Jewish tradition on Jonas's thought.

In this respect, the best way of illuminating the dialectical manner in which Jonas attempted to combine "the best of both worlds," is to analyze those texts in which he addressed specifically Jewish audiences and to ask both for the image of Judaism they convey and for the role that Jonas ascribes Jewish tradition. The basis for this analysis is provided by his essay on "Contemporary Problems in Ethics from a Jewish Perspective," published in 1968,[25] as well as a lecture on "Science and Ethics," delivered on April 30, 1967 at the Free Synagogue of Mount Vernon, New York.[26] Jonas starts out from a fundamental critique of "belief" in a pseudo-scientific picture of the world and of man, based on a denial of the idea of the createdness of the world. With the disenchantment of the world produced by modern science that leaves no room for awe before the cosmic mystery, and by a philosophy devoid of the insight into the inherent value of life (as expressed in the biblical "And God saw everything which He made, and, behold, it was very good"), a metaphysical vacuum has arisen, a vacuum against which modern philosophical ethics has nothing to offer. In the modern era, the position once occupied by the Torah's teaching of a transcendent cause of the world—teachings that called on humankind

[24] See the critical comments, from a Protestant point of view, of Hartmut Kress, "Ethik der Werte zwischen Säkularisierung und tradierter Gotteslehre. Impulse und Grenzen der Ethik Hans Jonas' in protestantischer Sicht," in *Hans Jonas—von der Gnosisforschung zur Verantwortungsethik*, ed. Wolfgang E. Müller (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2003), 135–55.

[25] Hans Jonas, "Contemporary Problems in Ethics from a Jewish Perspective," in Hans Jonas, *Philosophical Essays: From Ancient Creed to Technological Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), 168–82 (previous versions were published in *Central Conference of American Rabbis Journal* [January 1968]: 27–39, and *CCAR Journal Anthology on Judaism and Ethics*, 1969).

[26] A typed manuscript (23 pages) can be found in the Hans Jonas papers, Philosophical Archives of the University of Konstanz, HJ 1–10–5e; the German article "Aktuelle ethische Probleme aus jüdischer Sicht," in *Scheidewege* 24 (1994/95): 3–15, contains elements of the unpublished English version.

to assume responsibility—has now been usurped by ethical relativism and indifference.

Above all, the denial of the divine origin of man, as expressed in the notion of his being created in the "image of God," including the ethical obligation it implies—"You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy" (Leviticus 19:2)—leads, in Jonas's view, to the situation where modern man, divested of his transcendent dignity, is torn between grandeur and misery, hopelessly at the mercy of the tension between the unrestrained power of his forces and a fundamental lack of ethical orientation. At the same time, man finds himself exposed to an unprotected existence in a morally indifferent cosmos, caught, as it were, in a radicalized Gnostic-nihilistic despair about the world. The intrinsic connection between the wretchedness of a humankind that has lost all traces of awe before nature, and a technological power that gives humans the sense of walking in God's footsteps, represents the most important philosophical challenge of the present day, and Judaism, Jonas maintains, cannot afford to remain silent in the face of it: "Surely, Judaism must take a stand here, and in taking it must not be afraid to challenge some of the cherished beliefs of modernity." Even if the psychological atmosphere created by modern science is peculiarly unfavorable to the transcendent dimension expressed in the language of Jewish traditions and religious images, "some equivalent of their meaning, however remote from the literalness of their statement, must be preserved if we are still to be Jews and, beyond that special concern of ours, if there is still to be an answer to the moral quest of man."

This is, as Jonas emphasizes, no plea for the truth of Judaism or specific elements of its tradition. "Rather, *if* we are Jews—and a corresponding question Muslims and Christians must ask themselves—what counsel can we take from the perennial Jewish stance in the pressing dilemma of our time?"[27] The main role Jonas assigns to Judaism is that of objecting to the "arrogance which blinds to past wisdom," embracing instead an attitude of humility that would temper modern humankind's presumptuousness and "make us go slow on discarding old taboos, on brushing aside in our projects the sacrosanctity of certain domains hitherto surrounded by a sense of mystery, awe and shame."[28] It was legitimate, not to say necessary, from his point of view, for Jews to turn

[27] Jonas, "Contemporary Problems in Ethics from a Jewish Perspective," 178.
[28] Ibid., 179.

to their own religious inheritance, contradict purely scientific explanations of the world, and self-confidently affirm the mythical concept according to which the imperfect, mortal human being was created "in God's image" and nature was not simply the object of his will.

When reading this text, one gains the impression that Jonas is, indeed, very much in accord with his theoretical reflections on the foundations of his ethics of responsibility, engaged in a symbolical use of Jewish language, trying to convince his Jewish audience of the moral relevance of parts of the Jewish tradition. Apart from focusing entirely on the concept of creation and its anthropological implications ("image of God"), Jonas even seems, at the first glance, to reduce Judaism's role here to that of a wisdom of modesty, humility, self-restraint and awe (a crucial wisdom, however, for the survival of life on Earth), reducing it as well to a metaphorical reminder of or supporting argument for an important insight provided by his own philosophy, that is, by pure reason. Yet there seems to be a surplus in what Jonas presents to his audience that is not yet fully grasped by such an interpretation—a surplus revealing a more profound feeling of being bound by Jewish tradition as well as a sense of transcendence. It is more than human wisdom in the guise of religious symbols that Jonas perceives in Judaism; rather, he also reflects upon aspects of faith, authority, and covenantal responsibility: "Attention to our tradition," he points out, "is a Jewish prescription, directing us, not only to the human wisdom we can pick up there, but also to the voice of revelation we may hear through it."[29] This is no contradiction to Jonas's emphasis on reason, since for him the human organ for revelation is reason. What is extremely interesting, though, is that Jonas points to a dimension of Judaism, rooted in a covenantal communication, however vague, with God that clearly transcends the pure aspect of reason, reaching beyond to that of belief. In explaining the relevance of the concept of the "image of God," Jonas says in his unpublished talk in Mount Vernon:

> It is here Judaism retains its authority. How do we know that man is created in the image of God? The answer is *we do not know, we believe.* Why is there any reason for us to believe something we do not know? For two reasons. One is that what we know is a small part of that which is. It is obvious to any thoughtful observer of the scientific truths that they can give us only a segment, a part, a certain aspect of reality, and if we

[29] Ibid.

> define knowledge according to the scientific criteria, then indeed in those terms there is no knowledge of God, there is no knowledge of the very fact of duty or obligation, etc. But this is a concept of knowledge that fits the particular purposes of science and is not the kind of knowledge of God of which the Bible speaks, one in which the inner voice of man, the self-evidence of man and the voice that reaches him is listened to, and gives a different but compelling kind of testimony. The other reason for accepting the biblical statement about creation and man being beholden to something more than his own natural condition is that we have reason to be modest. You see, one characteristic of the modern spirit and one in the factors operative in the ethical predicament of modern man is the extreme cockiness of those who think that with science they not only now know everything that is to be known or at least are in a good way of getting to know everything they need to know, but this goes together with another self-confidence, namely [that] we are cleverer than our forebears.... We are surely more informed than our forebears who stood helpless before many of the problems of nature with which we now are easily able to deal with. But as regards to wisdom which asks what use we make of these powers..., in regard to that we are by no means superior to our forebears. Again not because they were by nature or in their own natural endowment superior to us, but because they listened to something else; and it is here that Judaism should help us to restore a proper relationship to tradition. Not in the sense that anything said by tradition must be accepted as absolutely binding, but in general just as Judaism can help us restore a sense of reverence and awe towards nature, and sense of reverence and awe towards the ultimate essence of ourselves, so it can help us to restore a sense of reverence and humility towards tradition. It is only man isolated from the tradition through which the voice of God speaks who is in the nihilistic situation, man who thinks he knows everything and needs not listen any more to the long dialogue in which man and God came to a mutual communication called the covenant. When it comes to wielding the power of modern technology, I think Judaism can tell us one thing. Don't be too sure, don't be too modern.[30]

It might not be a coincidence that it is here, in the context of a lecture given to a Jewish audience, apparently to a Reform congregation, that Jonas explicitly refers to the relevance and authority of that "long dialogue" between two partners of a covenant, invoking a personal God whose "voice" speaks through tradition. This is more than just rhetoric, even more than a metaphorical use of language—rather, it reveals a personal "confession," otherwise absent in his philosophical work, to a dimension of Judaism that cannot simply be interpreted

[30] Jonas, "Science and Ethics," 17–20 (emphasis in the original).

as a "symbolic shorthand" for a secular ethics of reverence for life. In any case, this singular reference to divine authority lends a strong sense of urgency to the practical consequences Jonas derives from it for an area of modern technology that troubled him most during these years—namely genetic engineering which, from his point of view, threatened to irreversibly change the "face or image of creation itself, including the image of man":

> The older and comforting belief that human nature remains the same and that the image of God in it will assert itself against all defacements by man-made conditions, becomes untrue if we "engineer" this nature genetically and be the sorcerers (or sorcerer's apprentices) who produce the future race of Golems.... We have not been authorized, so Jewish piety would say, to be makers of a new image, nor can we claim the wisdom and knowledge to arrogate that role. If there is any truth in man's being created in the image of God, the awe and reverence and, yes, utter fear, an ultimate metaphysical shudder, ought to prevent us from meddling with the profound secret of what is man.[31]

At that time, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Jonas was a lonely voice when it came to the discourse on bioethics within Judaism as well as in general society. His studies on the moral implications of technology and medical practice (eugenics, prenatal selection, organ transplant after determination of brain death, deferral of death, and every limitation of the right to die), including the important ethical guidelines that Jonas formulated, continue to be of principal relevance for the present. While assuming the basic rights and benefits deriving from the progress of research, these studies seek at the same time to draw distinct boundaries for its application. In contrast to that period, there is today a very diverse, differentiated, and controversial moral debate on bioethical questions, particularly on genetic engineering, cloning, and stem cell research.[32] Jonas's ethical position with regard to these topics

[31] Jonas, "Contemporary Problems in Ethics from a Jewish Perspective," 178 and 181. Note the parallels to Byron Sherwin's *The Golem Legend: Origins and Implications* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985); and see idem, *Jewish Ethics for the Twenty-First Century: Living in the Image of God* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000).

[32] See, e.g., Fred Rosner, *Modern Medicine and Jewish Ethics* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav Publishing House, 1986); Noam Zohar, *Alternatives in Jewish Bioethics* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1997); Elliot N. Dorff, *Matters of Life and Death: A Jewish Approach to Modern Medical Ethics* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1998); J. David Bleich, *Bioethical Dilemmas: A Jewish Perspective* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav Publishing House, 1998); Aaron Mackler, *Introduction to Jewish and Catholic Bioethics: A Comparative Analysis* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2003).

was based on the insight into the dignity of man, whose likeness to God, in his view, was not as a perfect, immortal being, untouched by suffering, but lay precisely in its vulnerability and mortality. For this, Jonas referred to the ancient Jewish wisdom expressed in the biblical relation to death:

> So let us be Jews also in this. With young life pressing after us, we can grow old and, sated with days, resign ourselves to death giving youth and therewith life a new chance. In acknowledging his finitude under God, a Jew, if he is still a Jew, must be able to say with the Psalmist: "We bring our years to an end as a tale that is told. The days of our years are threescore years and ten, Or even by reason of strength fourscore years.... So teach us to number our days, That we may get us a heart of wisdom" (Psalm. 90:10 12).[33]

II

Jonas's philosophical reflection on the ethical relevance of Jewish tradition and Jewish existential experience reached its greatest urgency where he sought to confront what he himself described in his later work as metaphysical and cosmogonic "speculations," that is, his intellectual struggles with the question of God and the createdness of life, with the phenomenon of evil, suffering, and the radical enormity of the Holocaust. The philosopher's memoirs powerfully reflect how, with profound grief over the fate of his mother and outrage at the genocide perpetrated by the Nazis in his heart—over the course of decades and by circuitous routes—he worked his way toward his interpretation of the meaning of the Holocaust for an understanding of the concept of God and of man's situation in a post-Holocaust world. This was, as he confesses, an intellectual "digression," with which he "left the permitted ground of philosophy"[34]—but he was strongly intrigued by this topic and took the risk of publicly reflecting on it in a very personal, intimate way. This applies in general to his "theological" or religious-philosophical reflections,[35] which he never failed to characterize as an aspect of his philosophy that was, although far from being a marginal

[33] Jonas, "Contemporary Problems in Ethics from a Jewish Perspective," 182.
[34] Jonas, *Erinnerungen*, 343.
[35] For a detailed analysis of this aspect of his work, see Thomas Schieder, *Weltabenteuer Gottes. Die Gottesfrage bei Hans Jonas* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1998).

element, an endeavor that was constantly at risk of transcending the limits of rational objectivity. After having been—as he admitted not without self-mockery in his memoirs—"such a wise guy as to bring the deep need to be able to believe in a God or in something divine in the world into harmony with my philosophical insights and convictions,"[36] he felt obliged to define his personal religious assumptions and to denote the limits of his approach:

> I do not want to convince anyone or suggest any theological theory that I will then have to continue fighting for. I am not even sure whether I have convinced myself. But that is the modest maximum that I can still accept for myself of the divine—which once earlier illuminated everything and which is now increasingly difficult to believe in—in conjunction with the overall state of things, including my scientific knowledge of the world, the universe and life on Earth. I am, however, deeply convinced that straightforward atheism is wrong, that there is something beyond that which we can now perhaps express only with the help of metaphors, but without which the overall picture of Being would be incomprehensible. Although it seems to me that a philosophical metaphysics cannot develop a direct concept of God... that rather this route has been barred since the Kantian critique of reason (hence my reference to myth), I believe that it is not forbidden for a rational or philosophical metaphysics to engage in "speculations" about the divine in the world. Rather, it seems to me that philosophical ontology may at least leave a space for the divine. It is a questionable, tentative attempt, for which I never made any claim to truth; for me, it has validity only through the fact that it does not simply dispute what once had such a huge influence on the history of humankind and in which, for example in the words of the prophets, inspiration was expressed from a source that is more than just world and nature.... That [i.e., the mythological manner of speaking used by Jonas] is perhaps the only way still open to us for expressing ourselves about these things—hinting, without claims to truth, and yet leaving room in the world for what lies beyond the world. For it seems to me that the human spirit is evidence that there is a transcendent dimension in the hustle and bustle of the world [*Weltgetriebe*].[37]

What was it that attracted Hans Jonas to these challenging topics? And how should one place this unconventional preoccupation with theological-metaphysical questions, in which Jewish elements and Jewish language most clearly play a role, in his work as a whole? A glance at the chronology of his work reveals that Jonas composed the texts in

[36] Jonas, *Erinnerungen*, 344.
[37] Ibid., 344 and 347.

question at the time when he was dealing intensively with questions of philosophy of nature and ethics. Thus, although in their public effect they seem to belong to lesser-known facets of his later work and generally have received only marginal attention in the philosophical literature, these texts clearly belong at the center of his thought, forming, as I would like to argue, part of the anti-nihilistic "revolt" he launched against escapism and ethical indifference.

Over the course of thirty years, time and again Jonas returned to questions regarding an appropriate concept of God, of divine silence or intervention in history, of human responsibility for God—with Auschwitz being the explicit or hidden challenge to which he felt obliged to respond. The first explicit reference to the Holocaust in Jonas's work occurs in his reflections upon "Immortality and the Modern Temper," first presented as the Ingersoll Lecture at Harvard University in 1961, in which he focused on the transcendental effect of human action.[38] Later, in his tribute to Rudolf Bultmann, "Is Faith Still Possible?," delivered in 1976 on the occasion of the academic commemoration for his friend and teacher, he publicly displayed an interesting undercurrent of his thought that is very important for understanding his view on divine action in the world. In an intriguing dialogue with Bultmann's concept of "demythologizing," designed to remove the obstacles of faith arising from the clash of the mythological biblical worldview with the modern one, Jonas reflects upon the "miracle" of God's non-physical intervention in the physical word. In view of the horrors of Nazi Germany, he seeks to rethink the "agonizing problem" of God's lordship,[39] which he rejects, but offers an alternative interpretation of divine intervention via revelation: What Jonas can accept is a notion of God's will and power "to act in the world, and this via the human soul."[40] The acceptance of such an idea is possible, from his point of view, without *sacrificium intellectu*, although it is "a pure decision of

[38] Hans Jonas, "Immortality and the Modern Temper," in *Harvard Theological Review* 55 (1962): 1–20 (reprinted in Jonas, *Mortality and Morality*, 115–30). There is evidence that Jonas presented these ideas to a meeting of rabbis in New York in 1965 under the title "Theology of the Suffering God (Implications of Ingersoll Lecture)"; see Hans Jonas papers, HJ 1–8–29.

[39] Hans Jonas, "Is Faith Still Possible? Memories of Rudolf Bultmann and Reflections on the Philosophical Aspects of His Work," in idem, *Mortality and Morality*, 144–64, here 169.

[40] Ibid., 161.

faith."[41] This is of vital importance for Jonas's understanding of the role he, as a philosopher, can attribute to God: Although powerless in terms of acting in the world and, as we will see, utterly dependent on human action, God can make himself heard—however solely through the human spirit.

In 1984, when Jonas was awarded the Leopold Lucas Prize at Tübingen University, he felt challenged to respond to the fact that the prize was named after a German rabbi who died in Theresienstadt in 1943 and whose wife Dorothea Lucas, like Jonas's mother, had been deported to Poland and murdered in Auschwitz in 1944. He decided, therefore, to go back to ideas he had first addressed in 1968 in a collected volume on post-Holocaust literature and theology[42] and to devote his speech to the topic "The Concept of God after Auschwitz: A Jewish Voice." Its argument will be presented after this brief survey of Jonas's "theological" writings.

Jonas's essay on "Matter, Mind and Creation" (1988) brings the insights of his philosophy of nature into discussion with cosmosgonic "speculations," which can be read as an attempt at a "proof of the existence of God," even if that "proof" takes the form of speculative contemplation on the cause of a universe in which "reason, freedom, and transcendence" are possible or "perhaps even necessarily flow out of it." Jonas admits that in these speculations "knowledge passes over unavoidably into faith," characterizing his philosophical approach to questions of cosmology and cosmogony as a "rational faith" that takes the liberty to adopt elements of both the religious tradition and the history of metaphysics, in an attempt to present a new philosophy that would provide a basis for an ethics of responsibility for the transcendent dimension of the universe.[43] Consisting of a stimulating series of reflections on the origins of life and the cosmos, Jonas's essay places modern natural science in dialogue with philosophical interpretations of the relationship between matter and spirit, and raises the question

[41] Ibid., 163.

[42] Hans Jonas, "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," in *Out of the Whirlwind: A Reader of Holocaust Literature*, ed. Albert H. Friedlander (New York: Schocken, 1968), 465–76.

[43] Jonas, "Matter, Mind and Creation," 171–72; and see Hans Jonas, "Vergangenheit und Wahrheit: Ein später Nachtrag zu den sogenannten Gottesbeweisen," in Hans Jonas, *Philosophische Untersuchungen und metaphysische Vermutungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp: 1994), 173–89. See Thomas Schieder, "'Hans Jonas' 'Gottesbeweise,'" in Müller, ed., *Hans Jonas—von der Gnosisforschung zur Verantwortungsethik*, 157–84.

of an "initial creative will" behind the process of evolution.[44] In the freedom of thinking and man's moral freedom, which means freedom for Good as well as for Evil, Jonas recognizes an immanent "transcendence" that points to the question of creation. However, in light of the failure of all attempts at a philosophical proof of God's existence, he sees his further explications as a "groping attempt and in all probability a mistaken one."[45]

At the start of life, he suggests, there is a "cosmogonic eros"[46] that endowed matter with the potential of mind—a "creative source" that Jonas terms "deity," or "Godhead," and which, after its initial act of creation, surrendered itself to the "endless play of the finite," the "inexhaustibility of chance," the "surprises of the unplanned," that is, the evolution of life.[47] The emphasis, so characteristic for Jonas's "theological" thinking, on "the blind, the planless, the accidental, the incalculable, the extremely precarious in the adventure of the world—in a word,...the enormous *gamble* that the first ground...wagered with creation," leads immediately to Auschwitz, which, from his point of view, has to be understood as a "theological event."[48] The central idea of his speculations is that of God's renunciation of power in favor of cosmic autonomy. While he finds a point of reference in Hegel's dialectic concept of the self-alienation of the primordial mind, or "the extreme self-divesting of the Creator-mind at the beginning of all things," he feels compelled to reject the optimistic idea, inherent in Hegel's "majestic account" of the world spirit [*Weltgeist*], of an intelligible, lawful, albeit dialectical, development of the world toward completion, or of a triumphal procession of mind through the world: In the twentieth century, "more sober onlookers of the large and small theaters of the world, of nature and history" have to deny this doctrine. Rather than being the world spirit's chosen, ultimately infallible executors, we human beings are responsible for the most terrible event in human history, which not only radically contradicted the idea of progress and completion, but which also posed a serious threat to the entire project of creation, including its divine source:

[44] Jonas, "Matter, Mind and Creation," 172.
[45] Ibid., 171.
[46] Ibid., 187.
[47] Ibid., 190.
[48] Ibid., 189.

> The disgrace of Auschwitz is not to be charged to some all-powerful providence or to some dialectically wise necessity, as if it were an antithesis demanding a synthesis or a step on the road to salvation. *We* human beings have inflicted this on the deity, we who have failed in the administering of his things. It remains on our account, and it is we who must again wash away the disgrace from our disfigured faces, indeed, from the very countenance of God. Don't talk to me here about the cunning of reason.[49]

What is indicated here, the concept of the powerlessness of a suffering God and of humankind's transcendent responsibility, found its most intriguing expression in Jonas's aforementioned essay, "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," where he attempted both to ground his ideas in philosophical reflections upon the essence of God and to link them to Jewish tradition. Among the many-voiced theological and religious-philosophical statements, discussions and testimonies on Judaism and Jewish faith after Auschwitz, this essay represents a truly exceptional and distinct voice. It is very telling, in terms of Jonas's ambivalent relationship to Jewish tradition and Jewish theology, that he never referred to other contemporary Jewish post-Holocaust theologies or philosophies, which apparently held little interest for him. There is, at least, no indication that he entered into a dialogue with other Jewish authors, read their works and accepted or rejected some of their ideas on the theological significance of Auschwitz. Rather, his own ideas seem to have emerged first from an encounter of his philosophical reflections upon the origin and essence of human life, including its mortality, and his personal struggle with the memory of the Holocaust, and second, from his confrontation with the atheistic alternative to faith embodied by the—Christian inspired—"Death of God" movement which had been discussed in the U.S. since the 1960s. Protestant theologians like Thomas J. J. Altizer, Paul van Buren, William Hamilton, and others, confronted with the impact of World War II, Hiroshima, and increasing secularism on religious thought, proclaimed the death of the transcendent God of biblical monotheism, often taking recourse in a secularizing Christology that allowed it to assume an immanent presence of the divine in the world. Only later, challenged by Jewish post-Holocaust theologies like those of Richard L. Rubenstein and responding to Martin

[49] Ibid., 188.

Buber's book *Eclipse of God* (1957),[50] did the movement begin to think about the religious implications of the Nazi genocide.[51] Although not a part of this diverse movement, Hans Jonas was aware of it and even contributed to an interfaith dialogue in New York, in which this sort of theology was discussed.[52] It can certainly be said that this was the intellectual atmosphere in which Jonas developed and discussed his ideas on post-Holocaust theology.

Another context that should be mentioned is a phenomenon to which Jonas developed a certain affinity because of the strong influence exerted by Alfred North Whitehead's philosophy on his own philosophy of nature.[53] Theologians of the so-called movement of "process theology," most prominently Charles Hartshorne, John B. Cobb, and Ray Griffin, rethought the traditional concept of God in light of the insights of Whitehead's metaphysical thinking, with results very much reminiscent of central arguments that can be found in Jonas's writings. The most important were these: a new understanding of God's power as a non-coercive force, influencing the world in a persuasive, spiritual manner; a strong emphasis of freedom and self-determination as a characteristic of life in universe; the notion that God is affected by and changes with the development of the universe; and, finally, an interpretation of immortality, which assumes that, despite radical mortality, human experiences live on forever in God, conceived as one who contains all that was. It might not be entirely appropriate if John B. Cobb called Jonas's essay on the "Concept of God after Auschwitz" a "fine piece of 'process theology,'" and welcomed him as an ally, at least not in the sense that Jonas himself felt that he was influenced by and part

[50] Martin Buber, *Eclipse of God: Studies in the Relation between Religion and Philosophy* (New York: Harper, 1957).

[51] See Thomas J. J. Altizer and William Hamilton, *Radical Theology and the Death of God* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merill, 1966); Thomas J. J. Altizer, *The Gospel of Christian Atheism* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966); idem, *Toward a New Christianity: Readings in the Death of God Theology* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1967); Bernard Murchland, ed., *The Meaning of the Death of God* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967); Stephen R. Haynes and John K. Roth, eds., *The Death of God Movement and the Holocaust: Radical Theology Encounters the Shoah* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999).

[52] The Hans Jonas papers at the Philosophical Archives of the University of Konstanz (HJ 1–23) contain the protocol of a conference on "The Ferment in Contemporary Theology" in 1965 in which topics like demythologization, atheism, and the Death-of-God theology were discussed.

[53] Strachan Donnelley, "Whitehead and Hans Jonas. Organism, Causality, and Perspective," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 19 (1979): 301–15; and see Jonas, *Erinnerungen*, 311–12.

of the movement. Still, the parallels are striking.[54] It is, however, an important task for the future to explore the affinities and differences in more detail and to compare his philosophy to both Christian process theologies and to Jewish thinkers, among them William E. Kaufman, Milton Steinberg, Harry Slonimski, and Samuel Alexander, who felt attracted to a sort of Jewish process theology, mainly because it offered new ways to think about theodicy.[55]

What are the main characteristics of Jonas's post-Holocaust philosophy? First of all, there is an acute awareness of the radical break the experience of Auschwitz entails for any further theological or philosophical discourse. Like so many Jewish intellectuals in the second half of the twentieth century, Jonas struggled with the existential questions with which survivors and any witness of the Holocaust inevitably were confronted in the wake of the Nazi genocide. Is it still possible and allowed to think about God as the God of history? Are the traditional answers to the "question of Job" still relevant? What had Auschwitz added "to what is familiar to us Jews from a millennial history of suffering and forms so essential a part of our collective memory?"[56] In contrast to those such as Theodor W. Adorno, who rigorously rejected all attempts at theodicy, "because actual events have shattered the basis on which speculative metaphysical thought could be reconciled with experience,"[57] Jonas believed that those "shadows" of the murdered, his mother among them, deserved "that something like an answer to their long-gone cry to a silent God be not denied to them."[58] Of course, he

[54] John B. Cobb, Jr, "Hans Jonas as Process Theologian," in *Jewish Theology and Process Thought*, ed. Sandra B. Lubarsky and David R. Griffin (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996), 159–62. Cobb was, however, aware that Jonas had come to parallel conclusions through independent reflection (159) and that there were important differences. Jonas's essay was also reprinted in the volume (143–57).

[55] See Norbert Samuelson, "Theodicy in Jewish Philosophy and David Griffin's Process Theology," in ibid., 127–41. For Jewish process theologies, see, e.g., William E. Kaufman, *The Evolving God in Jewish Process Theology* (Lewiston, NY: Mellen Press, 1997). It is also important to include comparative studies on Mordecai M. Kaplan and his affinity to process thought; see Jacob J. Staub, "Kaplan and Process Theology," in *The American Judaism of Mordecai M. Kaplan*, ed. Emanuel S. Goldsmith, Mel Scult, and Robert M. Seltzer (New York: New York University Press, 1990), 283–93.

[56] Hans Jonas, "The Concept of God after Auschwitz: A Jewish Voice," in *Mortality and Morality*, 131–43, here 132.

[57] Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Continuum, 1983), 362. For Adorno's reflections on the Holocaust, see Detlev Claussen, "Nach Auschwitz: Ein Essay über die Aktualität Adornos," in *Zivilisationsbruch: Denken nach Auschwitz*, ed. Dan Diner (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer-Verlag, 1988), 54–68.

[58] Jonas, "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," 131.

was aware of the abundance of attempts undertaken by Jewish tradition to lend meaning to suffering and persecution, including the concept of the covenant and the "riddle of election," which implies the idea of punishment by God as a result of Israel's unfaithfulness, or that of *Kiddushha-shem*, of the martyrdom of the innocent and the just for the sake of God. Both concepts, according to Jonas, have been shattered utterly when confronted with the unprecedented and unimaginable horror of the Holocaust:

> Nothing of this is still of use in dealing with the event for which "Auschwitz" has become the symbol. Not fidelity or infidelity, belief or unbelief, not guilt or punishment, not trial, witness and messianic hope, nay, not even strength or weakness, heroism or cowardice, defiance or submission had a place there. Of all this, Auschwitz, which also devoured the infants and babes, knew nothing; to none of it (with rarest exceptions) did the factory-like working of its machine give room. Not for the *sake* of faith did the victims die..., nor *because* of their faith or any self-affirmed bend of their being as persons were they murdered. Dehumanization by utter degradation and deprivation preceded their dying, no glimmer of dignity was left to the freights bound for the final solution, hardly a trace of it was found in the surviving skeleton specters of the liberated camps. And yet, paradox of paradoxes: it *was* the ancient people of the "covenant," no longer believed in by those involved, killers and victims alike, but nevertheless just this and no other people, under which the fiction of race had been chosen for this wholesale annihilation—the most monstrous inversion of election into curse, which defied all possible endowment with meaning. There does, then, in spite of all, exist a connection—of a wholly perverse kind—with the God-seekers and prophets of yore, whose descendants were thus collected out of the dispersion and gathered into the unity of joint death. And God let it happen. What God could let it happen?[59]

Like other Jewish thinkers, Jonas thus felt the radicalism of the lack of answers after the Holocaust, the profound dilemma that lies in the fact that language appears to fail, breaking in pieces in the face of the utter meaninglessness of the history that has to be remembered—a history, that as Dan Diner suggests, remains a "no man's land of understanding, a black box of explanation."[60] Adorno's famous challenging dictum in

[59] Ibid., 133.

[60] Dan Diner, "Zwischen Aporie und Apologie: Über Grenzen der Historisierbarkeit des Nationalsozialismus," *Ist der Nationalsozialismus Geschichte? Zur Historisierung und zum Historikerstreit*, ed. Dan Diner (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Verlag, 1987), 62–73, here 73.

Negative Dialectics—"After Auschwitz there is no word tinged from on high, not even a theological one, that has any right unless it underwent a transformation"[61]—is reflected in many Jewish (and some Christian) voices of the past decades, which, in the face of the destruction of European Jewry, attempted to formulate a historical-theological interpretation of the Holocaust.[62] Within this context, Hans Jonas clearly belongs into a tradition of reflection on God's powerlessness and suffering for which it is precisely not the justification of God that is the most burning problem; rather, the Jewish experience in the ghettos and death camps reveals the *failure of humanity*. From this point of view, the silence of man, of all those who watched or ignored the suffering and thus abandoned the Jewish people to unutterable loneliness, is even more incomprehensible and more appalling than the silence of God. This view corresponds to the despairing hope against hope that at least now, after Auschwitz, people could, in remembrance of the genocide, work for a humane society in which such a crime would be unthinkable.

What is fascinating about Jonas's thoughts on the "Concept of God after Auschwitz" presented "with fear and trembling"[63] in memory of his murdered mother, is the mixture of existential shock at God's silence in the face of the unprecedented genocide, philosophical rigor in shattering the notion of an omnipotent lord of history, and the compelling beauty and depth of his poetic "tentative myth" about the emergent, suffering transcendent God who, with the appearance of man in the evolution of creation, "awakened to itself and henceforth accompanies his doings with the bated breath of suspense, hoping and beckoning, rejoicing and grieving, approving and frowning—and, I daresay, making itself felt to him even while not intervening in the

[61] Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, 367.

[62] See, among others, Steven T. Katz, *Post Holocaust Dialogues: Critical Studies in Modern Jewish Thought* (New York: New York University Press, 1983); Christoph Münz, *Der Welt ein Gedächtnis geben: Geschichtstheologisches Denken im Judentum nach Auschwitz* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1996); Albert H. Friedlander, *Das Ende der Nacht: Jüdische und christliche Denker nach dem Holocaust* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1995); Birte Petersen, *Theologie nach Auschwitz? Jüdische und christliche Versuche einer Antwort* (Berlin: Institut Kirche und Judentum, 1996); Michael L. Morgan, ed., *A Holocaust Reader: Responses to the Nazi Extermination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); idem, *Beyond Auschwitz: Post Holocaust Jewish Thought in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Dan Cohn-Sherbok, *Holocaust Theology: A Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2002); Steven T. Katz, ed., *The Impact of the Holocaust on Jewish Theology* (New York: NYU Press, 2005). For an initial comparative analysis of Jonas's thinking in the context of this discourse, see Wiese, *The Life and Thought of Hans Jonas*, 128–49.

[63] Hans Jonas, "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," 131.

dynamics of the worldly scene."[64] The conviction that, after Auschwitz, the traditional (and absolutely central) Jewish concept of God as the lord of history, including the notion of his power to intervene, rescue, and redeem, is obsolete, leads to a radical rethinking of his attributes. As it is impossible to imagine, in the face of the burning children, a God who "is absolutely good and absolutely powerful, yet tolerate[s] the world as it is,"[65] Jonas is forced to postulate God's renunciation of power and to describe him in terms that he defines as (at least seemingly) incompatible with the biblical notion of majesty: 1) as a *suffering* God, not in the Christian sense of the *kenosis*, but a God suffering since the very act of creation—an idea justified by biblical images of God's sorrow in the face of the failures of his chosen people; 2) as a *becoming* God, as opposed to the Platonic-Aristotelican tradition of philosophical theology, affected by the vicissitudes of the world-process; and 3) as a *caring* God, who is involved in the fate of his creation—one of "the most familiar tenets of Jewish faith." However, this caring God is not "a sorcerer who in the act of caring also provides the fulfillment of his concern: he has left something for other agents to do and thereby has made his care dependent on them." He is therefore also "an endangered God, a God who runs a risk."[66] While this could still be understood in the sense of a mere limitation of God's power for the sake of human autonomy and responsibility (the idea most prominently invoked by Eliezer Berkovits),[67] Jonas radicalizes it by fundamentally excluding the possibility of God revoking such a voluntary concession, breaking his own rule of restraint, and intervening "with a saving miracle." If God possessed the theoretical power to do so, he must have done it in the face of the demonic cruelty:

> But no saving miracle occurred. Through the years that "Auschwitz" raged God remained silent. The miracles that did occur came forth from man alone: the deeds of those solitary, mostly unknown "just of the nations" who did not shrink from utter sacrifice in order to help, to save, to mitigate—even, when nothing else was left, unto sharing Israel's lot.... But God was silent. And there I say, or my myth says: Not because he chose not to, but because he *could* not intervene did he fail to intervene. For reasons decisively prompted by contemporary experience, I entertain the idea of God who for a time — the time of the ongoing world process — has divested himself of any power to interfere with the physical course of things; and who responds to the impact on his being by worldly events, not "with a mighty hand and outstretched arm," as we Jews on every Passover recite in remembering the exodus from Egypt, but with the mutely insistent appeal of his unfulfilled goal.[68]

[64] Ibid., 136.
[65] Ibid., 139.
[66] Ibid., 138–39.
[67] See Eliezer Berkovits, *Faith after the Holocaust* (New York: Ktav, 1973).

In his radical reflections on a God at risk, Jonas goes as far as envisioning the potential failure and distortion of the entire project of life. His God is a God who creates space, "in order that the world might be, and be for itself," but who, in the process of creation, "renounced his being, divesting himself of his deity—to receive it back from the odyssey of time weighted with the chance harvest of unforeseeable temporal experience: transfigured or possibly even disfigured by it."[69] In order to formulate a concept of God that allowed him to go beyond the mere idea of His *partial* self-restraint, Jonas drew inspiration above all from the ideas of the medieval mystic Isaac Luria. Most attractive for Jonas was the image of God's "self-contraction" (*tzimtzum*)—the idea that God, before creation was possible, had to limit Himself in order to create space outside of the divine. This was a very complex mythical theory, connected to the idea of a cosmogonic primordial catastrophe within the divine realms in which divine light was captured by the material world, which has to be raised up—by human action—to its divine origin in a process involving messianic elements.[70] In the context of Lurianic Kabbalah in the sixteenth century, this was a spiritual response to the suffering following the destruction of Iberian Jewry in 1492—an impressive mythological drama designed to interpret the experience of exile in cosmic terms, to strengthen messianic hope, and to inspire ethical responsibility. In modern terms, the metaphor of *tzimtzum* may be understood as attempting to explain the autonomy of both the world and humanity, while providing the theological explanation for why there is evil in the world, as well as for the gift of human freedom and the demand of responsibility it entails. The mystical speculations about

[68] Jonas, "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," 140–41.
[69] Ibid., 134.
[70] See, e.g., Shaul Magid, "Origin and Overcoming the Beginning: 'Zimzum' as a Trope of Reading in post-Lurianic Kabbalah," in *Beginning/Again: Toward a Hermeneutic of Jewish Texts*, ed. Aryeh Cohen and Shaul Magid (New York: Seven Bridges Press, 2002), 163–214.

tzimtzum, with their implication of divine self-limitation and suffering,[71] apparently lent themselves to support Jonas's mythical representation of a theo- and cosmogony in which God retreats completely into himself during creation. However, He does not merely limit himself, as the word *tzimtzum* implies, but rather entirely abandons His omnipotence, transferring the responsibility for the world and indeed for His own evolving deity to a wholly autonomous humanity. Although deeply affected by human suffering, God was silent in Auschwitz because He had relinquished all power, now being Himself at the mercy of human action:

> By foregoing its own inviolateness, the eternal ground allowed the world to be. To this self-denial all creation owes its existence and with it has received all there is to receive from beyond. Having given himself whole to the becoming world, God has no more to give: it is man now to give to him. And he may give by seeing to it that it does not happen or happen too often, and not on his account, that it "repented the Lord" to have made the world.[72]

Jonas understood his myth of an impotent, suffering God who renounces his invulnerability, as "a piece of frankly speculative theology,"[73] as "stammering"[74]—that is, in any event as merely a tentative effort, to preserve—in the face of the utter meaninglessness of the Holocaust for which there cannot be any consolation, and against the potential alternative of atheism—the image of a just and caring God. To do justice to Jonas's "theological" speculations, it must be noted that he presented them neither for their own sake nor for the sake of offering consolation. Although addressing the question of how we can face the full horror of the evil of Auschwitz and still maintain a faith in God, and "solving" that question by affirming God's intelligibility and His goodness, but denying His omnipotence, this is *not* the primary thrust of his ideas. His myth cannot be sufficiently understood without realizing that it is intended to emphasize man's overwhelming—human and cosmic—responsibility, which has become even more urgent after Auschwitz. Jonas's thoughts are linked indissolubly to his philosophy of

[71] See Elliot R. Wolfson, "Divine Suffering and the Hermeneutics of Reading: Philosophical Reflections on Lurianic Mythology," in *Suffering Religion*, ed. Robert Gibbs and Elliot R. Wolfson (London: Routledge 2002), 101–62.
[72] Jonas, "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," 142.
[73] Ibid., 131.
[74] Ibid., 142.

responsibility. What concerns Jonas most is the insight that the "destiny of the divine adventure" is placed in the "unsteady" human hands "in this earthly corner of the universe"—and, he adds skeptically: "So the deity, I imagine, must become anxious about His own cause. There is no doubt that we have the power in our hands to thwart the purpose of creation—and this precisely in the apparent triumph in us—and that we are perhaps energetic in doing so." As with the recourse he seeks in the categories of creation and humanity's likeness to God, Jonas's speculations on God's powerlessness are meant to impress upon humanity its categorical moral freedom, a freedom to do good as well as evil. These speculations aim at accentuating the human responsibility for life by finding a metaphorical language for what his *Imperative of Responsibility*, with its ontological grounding of ethics, was not able to express with the same urgency, namely, the fact, accessible to faith only,

> that we must now protect from ourselves the divine cause in the world that has become threatened by us, to which we pose a threat, that we must come to the aid of the deity who has become powerless for Himself regarding us. It is the duty of power that knows, a cosmic duty, for it is a cosmic experiment, which we can wreck along ourselves and spoil within ourselves.[75]

Without Jonas actually naming the concept, what stands behind these thoughts—as in the case of *tzimtzum*—is an equally philosophically transformed and radicalized interpretation of the kabbalistic idea of *tikkun olam*, the ability and obligation of humankind to work as partners in God's creation—and, most importantly, of the divine realm itself—toward its perfection and redemption.[76] In the context of Lurianic Kabbalah, however, this idea has a distinctly messianic purpose: It stands at the center of the cosmic drama of the "breaking of the vessels" and of the exile of the divine spark in matter, which confers upon humankind the noble, challenging task and dignity that, by fulfilling the commandments of the Torah and by its serious devotion in prayer, it may fundamentally influence the restoration of the world of the Divine. The coming of the Messiah who will gather the Jews from the Diaspora into the Land of Israel will then be the visible sign that the repair of all that is shattered, the redemption of the entire creation,

[75] Jonas, "Matter, Mind, and Creation," 191.
[76] For the diverse interpretations of the concept, see Gilbert S. Rosenthal, "'Tikkun ha-olam': The Metamorphosis of a Concept," in *Journal of Religion* 85 (2005): 214–40.

has reached its goal. According to this mythological system, God, as it were, delivers Himself into the hands of humankind and now depends upon the human will to return to Him throughout the cosmic process the wholeness He has surrendered as a consequence of His self-limitation. To Jonas, this tradition thus lends the means to express God's radical dependence on human responsibility. The messianic dimension of redemption, since it involves the interaction of God and man and therefore holds out promise for Israel and all humankind, plays a central role in the traditional concept of *tikkun olam*. Jonas's interpretation necessarily divests the myth of this messianic component, since the powerless deity he conceives of "has nothing more to give."

The profound inner connection between Jonas's theological struggle with the "collapse of civilization" in Auschwitz and his philosophical ethics finally becomes apparent if one considers that his "invented" myth originally emerged in the context of his anti-nihilistic reflections on the meaningfulness of radically mortal human life. In the essay "Immortality and the Modern Temper," the myth, while seeking to respond to the loss of any plausible religious hope for life after death and to acknowledge the definitive mortality of all organic life, serves primarily as a metaphorical expression of an ethical relationship to the world. Here too, Jonas entered into a dialogue with symbols anchored in the Jewish tradition, in order to establish the responsibility of humanity not only for the earth, but also for the earth's creator. For this purpose, he referred to one of the central symbols of the High Holidays, that of the "Book of Life," in which the names of all human beings and their deeds are inscribed. Characteristically, Jonas transforms this image, investing it with the idea of an "immortality of the deeds," which helps express the thought that human actions have a meaning that transcends individual mortal life. Apart from the ethical element inherent in this idea, there is still another important aspect here that is immediately related to Auschwitz and theodicy. The question is haunting him, what the fate was of those who were denied the chance to inscribe themselves in the Book of Life, because their lives were cut off before they could do so, or "their humanity was destroyed in degradations most cruel and most thorough such as no humanity can survive?"

> I am thinking of the gassed and burnt children of Auschwitz, of the defaced, dehumanized phantoms of the camps, and of all the other, numberless victims of the other man-made holocausts of our time. Among men, their suffering will be forgotten, and their names even sooner. Another chance is not given to them, and eternity has no compensation for what has been missed in time. Are they, then, debarred from an immortality which even their tormentors and murderers obtain because they could *act* abominably, yet accountably, thus leaving their sinister mark on eternity's face?[77]

Another concept, this time not derived from Jewish tradition but from Gnostic motifs known to Jonas from the Mandaean and Manichaean sources with which he was so familiar, helped him to express both the hope that the suffering of the victims would not be forgotten, and the challenging idea of an immediate transcendent effect of human action: the "simile" of a "transcendent 'image' filled in, feature by feature, by our temporal deeds."[78] It is the "collective" variant of the image symbolism in such Gnostic texts (Jonas quotes Mani: "At the end, when the cosmos is being dissolved, the Thought of Life will gather himself and shall form his Self in the shape of the Last Image")[79] that allowed him to think about an inversion, as it were, of the concept of man's being created in the image and likeness of God. Man is created "for" the image God, rather than "in" his image[80]—in the temporal events within the world, God's countenance emerges, "slowly defining itself as it is traced with the joys and sufferings, the triumphs and defeats of divinity in the experience of time, which thus immortally survive. Not the agents, which must ever pass, but their acts enter into the becoming Godhead and indelibly form his never decided image."[81] Jonas uses this Gnostic-inspired symbolism in order to emphasize—against any Gnostic world-negation and ethical indifference—human responsibility for creaturely life, and beyond that for the fate of the Godhead whose face is disfigured by human wrongs.[82] In his effort to hold fast to the hope that the victims' suffering will not be forgotten, he dared to speak, in anthropomorphic images, about the transcendent effect of the Holocaust:

> And this I like to believe: that there was weeping in the heights at the waste and despoilment of humanity; that a groan answered the rising shout of ignoble suffering, and wrath—the terrible wrong done to the

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[77] Jonas, "Immortality and the Modern Temper," 129.
[78] Ibid., 123.
[79] Ibid., 124.
[80] Ibid., 128.
[81] Ibid., 124.
[82] Ibid., 128: "We can build and we can hurt, we can nourish and we can starve divinity, we can perfect it and we can disfigure its image: and the scars of one are as enduring as the luster of the other."

> reality and possibility of each life thus wantonly victimized, each one a thwarted attempt of God. "The voice of thy brother's blood cries unto me from the ground": Should we not believe that the immense chorus of such cries that has risen up in our lifetime now hangs over our world as a dark and accusing cloud? That eternity looks down upon us with a frown, wounded itself and perturbed in its depths?[83]

With the thought of the suffering, vulnerable God, Jonas ultimately wanted to avoid the urge to flee into Manichaean-dualistic interpretations of the question of evil and to underscore the fact that the actual challenge is not that of theodicy, but solely that of the humanly caused "disgrace Auschwitz," which humankind, by being aware of its responsibility in the present and by averting the threats of the future, must wash away "from the very countenance of God."[84]

Jonas's speculations do, of course, provoke most important questions: Can the challenge of radical evil be banished with the concept of a powerless God? Is the apologia of God that absolves him from any participation in suffering and evil, declaring Him instead to be a helpless object of evil engendered by human action, not a way of evading theodicy? How comforting is a theological concept that seems to imply the utter forsakenness of human beings by God, amounting to a sense of cosmic abandonment that does not differ in any way from the nihilistic feeling, let us say, of Albert Camus's *L'étrangére*? Other crucial questions, both from a Christian and a Jewish perspective, concern the theological price that Jonas's speculation seems to imply: Is not God ultimately absolved from the question of theodicy if represented as radically powerless? What does this mean for a relationship to God? Does not the concept of God's powerlessness divest the sufferer of any hope, leaving him in a void of promise? Is not the covenantal partnership, which Jonas affirms, disintegrated, a one-sided, uni-directional covenant, since the world is devoid of divine redemptive action and entirely dependent on human decision? To the latter question, Jonas would certainly have answered that God's part in the covenantal relationship consists in the hidden revelation of His will both in human reason and in Jewish tradition, that is, in universal and in Jewish terms. From the point of view of Jewish thought there are certainly much more critical questions to ask. Most of Steven Katz's arguments against Irving Greenberg's or Arthur A. Cohen's concepts,

[83] Ibid., 129.
[84] Jonas, "Matter, Mind, and Creation," 188.

according to which the experience of the Holocaust forces us to think about God in a way that conceives Him increasingly as a "silent," non-interfering partner, who is not to be held responsible for the events of human history, applies also to Jonas's model, though in a different way. The implications of such a principle "for traditional and essential Jewish concerns as covenant, reward and punishment, morality, Torah, Mitzvot, redemption, and other eschatological matters," Katz argues, are enormous and have to be balanced with the apparent theological gains of such models.[85] Of course, Jonas would have agreed, claiming that these traditional elements are either irrelevant after the Holocaust or have to be reinterpreted.

A dialogue of Jewish thought with Hans Jonas, not only with his post-Holocaust theology but with his entire work is still ahead. There has, thus far, been no serious philosophical and theological discussion whatsoever of his ideas about the impact of the Holocaust on attempts to interpret the place of God in contemporary religious thought. Nor have there been any attempts to interpret Jonas's thought critically in the context of the overall Jewish discourse on theology after Auschwitz.[86] Among the wealth of Jewish thinkers with whom Jonas's work should be brought into dialogue, I would just like to mention Abraham J. Heschel: his idea of religion being God's question and man's response, his hope for an ethics of awe and of human responsibility for the preciousness and dignity of life as a response to the Holocaust, his grounding of ethics in the concept of man's createdness in the image of God, his insistence on a sense of mystery, and his emphasis on God's passion for life that urges man to contribute to (messianically understood) *tikkun*—all of this displays a strong affinity to some of Jonas's central ideas, while

[85] See Steven S. Katz, "'Voluntary Covenant': Irving Greenberg on Faith after the Holocaust," in Steven S. Katz, *Historicism, the Holocaust, and Zionism: Critical Studies in Modern Jewish Thought and History* (New York: New York University Press, 1992), 225–50, here 244; Steven S. Katz, "'The Tremendum': Arthur Cohen's Understanding of Faith after the Holocaust," in ibid., 251–73. For both thinkers, see Morgan, *Beyond Auschwitz*, 121–54.
[86] See, however, Vogel, "Hans Jonas's Exodus: From German Existentialism to Post-Holocaust Theology," who describes Jonas as "one of the most significant Jewish theologians of the post-Holocaust period: a voice as systematic and relevant as that of any contemporary Jewish thinker" (3); and see Irene Kajon, "Hans Jonas and Jewish Post-Auschwitz Thought," *Journal of Jewish Thought & Philosophy* 8 (1998): 67–80; Lawrence Troster, "Hans Jonas and the Concept of God after the Holocaust," *Conservative Judaism* 55 (2003): 16–25. A critical view is expressed in Arnold Goldberg, "Ist Gott allmächtig? Was die Rabbinen Hans Jonas entgegnen würden," *Judaica* 47 (1991): 51–58.

also presenting challenges or alternatives with which his philosophy could be confronted.

These few unsystematic thoughts are by no means a sufficient attempt to contextualize Jonas's "The Concept of God after Auschwitz" in the broader theological and philosophical debates on the impact of the Holocaust on religion and ethics. It would be a most rewarding task to explore that essay not only within the context of Jonas's life and philosophy, but to undertake a much more comprehensive comparative analysis, aiming at what Jonas himself—for good reasons, since his intentions were entirely different—failed to engage in: a critical dialogue with twentieth-century Jewish thought as well as with Christian and secular philosophical debates on questions of theodicy, evil, and human responsibility. In this larger context, Jonas's "Jewish voice" could be heard much more distinctly as that which he admits it to be: one single voice among a plurality of other voices, without any ambition to give convincing and ultimate answers, or provide comfort and meaning; a very personal and speculative "invention of tradition," as it were, aiming at reconciling his own life experience, the historical events of his time, and his own philosophy of nature with the equally personal decision to reject atheism; and, finally, as an attempt to tie his "strange and rather willful private fantasy," developed over decades, to "the more responsible tradition of Jewish thought,"[87] accentuating it, however, in a most untraditional, radical way and merging it with other influences—from Gnostic mythology through Protestant theology and process philosophy to an anti-existentialist ontology.

For all the reservations that one can muster from the point of view of a systematic theology, whether Jewish or Christian, of Jonas's consciously subjective-meditative speculations on God's powerlessness, one will be permitted to judge that this is an intriguing attempt to hold fast to the meaningfulness of human existence as well as the legitimacy of faith without dismissing the shadow of radical doubt that the disastrous revelation of human evil in the Holocaust has cast on all religious discourse. It cannot be denied that Jonas spoke from the depth of his own Jewish faith and convictions. The problem of evil, for him, was not just an ethical problem, but one that affected his religious sentiments and forced him radically to rethink his concept of God and of Judaism. On the other hand, the ethical significance of the Jewish heritage played a

[87] Jonas, "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," 136.

central role for his philosophical self-understanding. For the entirety of Hans Jonas's philosophy, it is crucial that his interpretation of the ethical challenges of the present day, inspired by a belief—rooted in Jewish tradition—in the createdness and sanctity of life, is not to be understood in isolation from his existential-intellectual confrontation with the abyss of inhumanity symbolized by Auschwitz, and from his conviction of the transcendental responsibility of man. This is the most decisive element of his theological speculation, more important than any other intention he might have had. The idea that—together with the threat to existence and the humane nature of human life in an age of genocide and of technological capacity of self-destruction—"God's image" is in danger, turns out to be a covert leitmotif of the cosmogonic "speculations" that invest Jonas's philosophical-ethical model, with its vivid, evocative language, with such a compelling force. His formulations ultimately aim at expressing his passionate objection to what he diagnoses as the irresponsible devaluation of life as well as to all of fatalism, which he saw as betrayal of the responsibility for the "divine adventure," which was passed to man along with the likeness to God:

> That in these terms an eternal issue is at stake together with the temporal one—this aspect of our responsibility can be our guard against the temptation of fatalistic acquiescence or the worse treason of *après nous le deluge*. We literally hold in our faltering hands the future of the divine adventure and must not fail Him, even if we would fail ourselves.[88]

III

The complex ways in which Jonas relates philosophy to Judaism must be understood against the horizon of a broad debate about the relevance of Judaism for a modern, secular global society. For Jonas himself, after all, his views on Judaism and philosophy remain indebted to his self-understanding as a philosopher committed to the concept of universal reason. He thus sought to stress the outstanding ethical meaning of the Jewish theology of creation and, simultaneously, to integrate its implicit ideas of the dignity and sanctity of life into a modern philosophical ethical approach, based, as he claimed, on pure reason and the "phenomenon of life." A critical perspective, comparing Jonas to

[88] Jonas, "Immortality and the Modern Temper," 130.

other contemporary Jewish thinkers and confronting his views with the complex religious and philosophical discourse on the relevance of Judaism in a post-Holocaust world, must emphasize that he certainly failed to do justice to the richness of Jewish tradition and to relate to broader discussions within the realm of Jewish thought. There are certainly alternatives, much more thoroughly rooted in the Jewish spiritual world, to the founding of an ethics of responsibility solely in the concept of creation—among them the messianic elements of mysticism and a Torah-based ethics of human partnership with God. And there is certainly an abundance of other, quite different responses to the challenge put to Jewish faith by the Holocaust—approaches that Jonas apparently never took notice of when formulating his admittedly "stammering" philosophical speculations.

It is obvious that when relating to Judaism, Jonas often displayed a strong degree of eclecticism, especially drawing on those traditions that allowed him to lend urgency to his ethics of responsibility and to find a language with which to express the "mystery" of life, at the expense of a more complete image of potentially relevant Jewish values, ideas, and hopes, and at the risk of being seen to reduce Judaism to a wisdom of humility, self-limitation, and preservation of the sanctity of life. This eclectic relationship with Judaism, further aggravated by the fact that Jonas tends to make use of the elements of tradition that he wants to accentuate as especially, if not entirely, as a "symbolic shorthand" for universal truths and values accessible to reason alone, certainly reflects his ambivalent relationship to the whole of religious tradition; this ambivalence is deeply rooted in the liberal, secularizing atmosphere of German Jewry in the Weimar years on the one hand, and on the dramatic confrontation with the shattering event of the Holocaust on the other. Jonas's intellectual path from his studies in the 1920s onward led to an approach to Judaism that combined a peculiar mixture of existentialist philosophy (or the struggle with it), Zionist conviction, and a preoccupation with religion deeply informed by Protestant as well as general philosophical categories. As emphasized above, in the context of Jonas's confession in his memoirs, his strong sense of belonging to Judaism was first and foremost rooted in his Zionist-inspired affirmation of the Jewish nation, culture and fate—the *Judenschicksal*—a fate that, at the same time, dominated his experience and profoundly affected the course of his life. The significance of the Jewish dimension of Jonas's life for his work is, therefore, absolutely indisputable.

With regard to the specifically Jewish dimension of Jonas's thought, things seem to be much more complex. As a thinker who consciously avowed himself to Judaism, without devoting himself to what could be called, with Hermann Cohen, a philosophy from the sources of Judaism, he was admittedly much less home in Jewish tradition and scholarship than religiously committed contemporary Jewish thinkers. His intellectual world was much broader and universal, shaped as it was by his engagement with Gnosticism, modern philosophy, Christian thought, and the burning ethical questions of his time. Nonetheless, a strong sense of religiosity shines through his work, confirmed by his autobiographical remarks, which portray him as a critical philosopher believing in a covenant, whose divine partner remained "somewhat nebulous" to him; as an ethical thinker deeply influenced by the concept of human transcendent responsibility; and as a human being profoundly troubled by the abyss of inhumanity revealed in the twentieth century as well as the nihilistic indifference toward a potential annihilation of natural life on Earth. Judaism, as he was convinced, is a rich, precious tradition embodying the values necessary to counter both the demonic forces of contempt for humanity and the no less destructive irresponsibility of a technology deployed without any sense of its limits.

It should be emphasized that it was not Jonas's intention to contribute to the Jewish discourse or to present a philosophy of Judaism (or a Jewish philosophy). Rather, as he never ceased to insist, Jonas understood himself as a philosopher indebted to reason alone, though to an intellectual tradition of humanistic, enlightened philosophy that had its roots in both Jerusalem and Athens. Despite the limited variety of Jewish concepts referred to in his philosophy, and in spite of his own programmatic predilection for Athens, it appears that his work can at best be only partially understood if one neglects his relationship to twentieth-century Jewish thought and to his sense of what it meant to be Jewish. "That one is a philosopher and a Jew at one and the same time"—the characteristic polarity of this formulation cannot be resolved for Jonas. Indeed, all the evidence suggests that he himself had no desire to resolve it, but rather took it to be the condition of his own life and intellectual world. To be sure, Jonas found it extremely difficult to harmonize fully the two fundamental dimensions of his existence and thought: his strong commitment to Judaism and his intellectual aspiration for autonomous reason and knowledge. He nonetheless was able to unite them to the extent that they illuminated one another in

fascinating ways. The unconventional, often irritatingly unorthodox form of dialogue he conducted between elements of Jewish tradition and the philosophic search for truth, determined as this dialogue was by the vicissitudes of the past century, attests precisely *not* to a purely private loyalty to a basically irrelevant religious tradition. It attests rather to the fact that Jonas entrusted to Judaism the theological and ethical force to help preserve, in a time of its greatest endangerment, the dignity of human existence—as the "wisdom" of indebted life and affirmed mortality, as a source of strength against the temptation of nihilistic despair, as opposition to inhumanity, and as reminder of the responsibility to live such that God "need not repent" for having allowed the world to come into being.[89] At the end of his life, though, it was to philosophy that Jonas would assign the task of maintaining trust in the capacity of reason—despite all legitimate doubts about reason's efficacy. In one of his late philosophical lectures, he assigned to philosophy the task of facing with responsible self-restraint the fatal fate of humankind's own power and to "persevere in this endeavor, undeterred by all reasonable doubt as to whether it will meet with success. The coming century has a right to this perseverance."[90]

[89] Jonas, "Immortality and the Modern Temper," 129.
[90] Jonas, "Philosophy at the End of the Century," 55.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

INFANTS, PATERNALISM, AND BIOETHICS: JAPAN'S GRASP OF JONAS'S INSISTENCE ON INTERGENERATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY*

William R. LaFleur

1. *A Surprising Affinity*

To be charged with holding views that are "paternalistic" has been something that thinkers in Europe and America have been eager to avoid for decades. Bioethicists have been especially sensitive to it. We need to pay close attention, therefore, when Richard Wolin judges Hans Jonas to have held views that are not only "antidemocratic" but also "paternalistic."[1] Since Wolin links this criticism with an attempt to show that Jonas remained far more influenced by Heidegger than he would publicly admit, the issue is crucial, especially for persons—among whom I number myself—who deem Jonas to be a thinker of extraordinary importance and relevance for our time. Wolin's perspective on Jonas, although in my view seriously mistaken, has been influential. When, for instance, in public seminars on bioethics I have tried to make a case for the importance of Jonas, I have met with resistance from persons who, while themselves eager to articulate a distinctively Jewish perspective on this topic, at the same time reject Jonas as irrelevant. And one stated reason for such a dismissal has been that Jonas remained, even after his early teacher's embrace of the Third Reich, a closeted Heideggerian.

So I here will scrutinize Wolin's claim of paternalism in Jonas. But I will do so in a roundabout way—specifically by first paying some attention to how ethicists and bioethicists in Japan have looked at this

* Here I express my gratitude to scholars who criticized and commented on earlier versions of portions of this paper presented at the Department of Philosophy, New School University, September 10, 2004, and at the Center for the Study of Religion and Conflict at Arizona State University, November 6–7, 2005. Among others who have provided valued comments are Robert N. Bellah and Henry Rosemont, Jr.

[1] Richard Wolin, *Heidegger's Children: Hannah Arendt, Karl Löwith, Hans Jonas, and Herbert Marcuse* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 123.

matter. Jonas's work is fairly well known in Japan and, at least from how I see things, deemed far more important there than in North America to persons doing ethics. In my own reading in Japanese bioethics over more than a decade I have been surprised at how often I have seen Jonas cited. Jonas figures prominently in a centrally important treatise on bioethics published in 1986 by Hisatake Katô,[2] arguably Japan's leading contemporary ethicist and the person under whose editorial overview Jonas's *Das Prinzip Verantwortung* was translated and published in Japanese in 2000. My supposition, based on references to him in their works, is that most of Japan's major philosophers have read Jonas—in German, in English, or in Japanese. Yoshihiko Sugimura, a Professor at Kyoto University, has compiled and provided me with a list of twenty-two relatively recent publications in Japanese discussing Jonas.[3] And, significantly, the general Japanese reading public has also been introduced to the thought of Jonas in, for instance, an op-ed on Jonas in the mass-circulation national newspaper, *Mainichi Shimbun*.[4]

It appears that for his readers in Japan what best encapsulates the distinctively important principle in the thought of Jonas is what is referred to as his perspective on *sedaikan no rinri*, an "intergenerational ethics." The Japanese phrase denotes "an ethic that spans the generations." It is seen as deeply connected to Jonas's insistence that a Kantian ethic, because it focused solely on responsibility to one's contemporaries, is in serious need of being supplemented. The new imperative of our time, Jonas wrote, "adds a *time* dimension to the moral calculus which is entirely absent from the instantaneous logical operation of the Kantian imperative."[5]

Although I do not find it mentioned within the materials in Japanese with which I am familiar, I here offer the hypothesis that Japanese ethicists have, at least compared to their Anglo-American counterparts, gravitated so readily to the Jonasian view in part because in many ways it is not really so very new to them. That is, I will try to show that this theme in Jonas has a strong, even if implicit, affinity with a major emphasis in traditional ethical systems in East Asia, specifically

[2] Hisatake Katô, *Baioeshikusu to wa nanika* (Tokyo: Miraisha, 1986).

[3] Personal communication, May 21, 2007. At this date I have not read all of these.

[4] Osamu Kanamori, "Yonasu: 'Sedaikan no rinri' to iu sekinin," *Mainichi Shimbun*, November 19, 2001.

[5] Hans Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 13.

in Confucianism and the Buddhism of Japan that often was the institutional carrier of an emphasis upon intergenerational connections and obligations. I also hope to show that the tracing out of the parallel here might suggest that it would be a tremendous loss to ourselves and future generations if we were to ignore, peripheralize, or misconstrue Jonas's ethical insights. The suspicion that Jonas's views on bioethical matters may be tainted by "paternalism" would, I am afraid, have a deleterious effect on this thinker's potential for having a positive impact upon our own era. And it is for that reason I wish to show that this charge is in error and should not impede our employment of Jonas's invaluable insights.

2. *Autonomy and the Trouble with Children*

As noted, Anglo-American bioethicists are exceedingly wary of anything in their own viewpoints that might open them to the criticism of having allowed entry and a role to elements of paternalism. And to ferret out the paternalism hidden away in the perspective of others is deemed a valued service. This reflects the fact that in this domain the dominant stream during much of the last half of the twentieth century attributed high importance to the principle of autonomy. Especially in American bioethics up to the very present, autonomy as a principle has usually been allowed to trump other principles to which appeal might be made. Although some writers have expressed concern that this may not be healthy for bioethics in the long run,[6] an emphasis upon patient choice fits so handily into the socio-economic ethos of modern capitalist societies that it is difficult to see how it might be dethroned. And in the "globalization" of bioethics a largely American campaign to rub out vestiges of physician paternalism in other societies is the flip-side of an extension of the rule of patient autonomy at home. The philosophical bases for this emphasis can easily be traced to Kant and the major political philosophers of modern liberal democracies.

[6] James F. Childress, *Practical Reasoning in Bioethics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 67ff.; Carl Elliott, *A Philosophical Disease: Bioethics, Culture, and Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 106; Bruce Jennings, "Autonomy and Difference: The Travails of Liberalism in Bioethics," in *Bioethics and Society: Constructing the Ethical Enterprise*, ed. Raymond DeVries and Janardan Subedi (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1998), 258–69; Renée C. Fox and Raymond DeVries, "Afterward: The Sociology of Bioethics," in ibid., 270–76.

The very existence of children and their presence as patients within our medical settings, however, put a serious strain on this theory. Infants give instant trouble to the notion that the principle of autonomy should have sovereign rule. How can they be autonomous? Are children merely an "exception" that does not disturb the overall formulation? Should they donate organs? Give "implicit" consent to the legal forms allowing them to be part of potentially risky clinical trials? Some kind of provisional "paternalism," if rightly understood and implemented, would seem called for in the case of children.[7] Indeed, to the degree that emerging biotechnologies may increasingly manipulate the genetic inheritance of the unborn (sometimes called "liberal eugenics"), those most affected will, by virtue of not yet being alive, necessarily have neither the information about what is now being done to them nor the possibility to consent or object to it.[8] Pure, unmediated paternalism will have to be operative in such contexts. MacIntyre hints at the depth of the problem: "In most moral philosophy the starting point is one that already presupposes the existence of mature independent practical reasoners whose social relationships are the relationships of the adult world. Childhood, if noticed at all, is a topic that receives only brief and incidental attention."[9]

Especially for bioethics this is no minor anomaly. What is to be made of an ethical theory whose core assumption must be forced to be inapplicable to a vast and important subset of humanity? Likewise, what is to be done with a vaunted principle, one with putative universality, when its application is totally blocked by certain and unmovable chronobiological realities? In a word, is not the adoption of a no-paternalism rule invalidated as soon as children, and especially infants, become the persons to whom this rule is supposed to be applied? To pick this nit, as both Jonas and certain Japanese appear to have done, is to detect that a fairly large ethical fabric has begun to unravel.

[7] Tamar Shapiro, "What is a Child?," *Ethics* 109 (1999): 715–38; Sigal R. Benporath, "Autonomy and Vulnerability: On Just Relations Between Adults and Children," *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 37, no. 1 (2003): 127–44.

[8] Hisatake Katô, *Nôshi, kurôn, idenshi chiryô* (Tokyo: PHP Shinsho, 1999); William R. LaFleur, "More Information, Broader Dissent on Informed Consent," *American Journal of Bioethics* 6, no. 1 (Jan/Feb 2006): 15–16.

[9] Alasdair MacIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues* (Chicago, IL: Open Court, 1999), 81. I am grateful to Robert N. Bellah for bringing this item to my attention. Personal communication, December 28, 2004.

Therefore, the very first objection we can make to Wolin's criticism of Jonas is that we are scarcely today where we may assume that a "paternalism" barb, if thrown, will stick like ideational Velcro to Jonas. Jonas called that to which he objected a "dogma" and realized that, as such and because it pretended to be universal, it could not tolerate the existence of even a single "exception" to its supposed universality.[10] And this "exception"—viz., the problem posed by the very existence of children—was far from trivial.

3. *Urbild and Ambiguity*

Jonas realized that calling attention to the "problem" of children could serve not only to expose a much larger lacuna in the dominant ethics of the modern West but also to provide a base for his own constructive ethics of intergenerational responsibility. One exposure could perform multiple tasks. As already noted, the mere existence of this striking "exception" could show that the autonomy rule did not possess the universality being claimed for it. But Jonas could also use it to demonstrate a clear instance where an "ought" derived from an "is." And, finally, this in turn could be material out of which he could show the ethical imperative of taking responsibility for not just individuals but whole generations who will live in the future.

Jonas, it needs remembering, was eager to demonstrate that there is a problem making absolute in ethics the rule that an "ought" [*Sollen*] may never be derived from an "is" [*Sein*]. In this he was resisting what he called a "dogma" given us by Kant, Hume, and much of modern ethical theory. Wanting to come up with a perfect example, a recoverable primary image of an unmistakable conflation of "is" and "ought," he offered that of the parent and child, more precisely the suckling infant [*Säugling*]. He asked rhetorically: Can we call to mind a primary image [*Urbild*] that we all already have of such a conflation? His response:

> Yes, we answer: that which was the beginning of each of us, when we could not know it yet, but ever again offers itself to the eye when we can look and know. For when asked for a single instance (one is enough to break the ontological dogma) where that coincidence of "is" and "ought" occurs, we can point at the most familiar sight: the newborn,

[10] Jonas, *The Imperative of Responsibility*, 131.

> whose mere breathing uncontradictably addresses an ought to the world around, namely, to take care of him.[11]

Jonas's critique of Kant and Hume is trenchant. Wanting to bring forward even one counter-example the very *content* of which would serve as the basis for a basic re-orientation of how we conceive of moral responsibility, he insisted that the responsibility owed toward an infant is unconditional:

> This is the only class of fully selfless behavior supplied by *nature*; and indeed, it is this one-way relationship to dependent *progeny*, given with the biological facts of procreation, and *not* in the mutual relationship between independent adults (from which, rather, springs the idea of reciprocal rights and duties) that one should look for the origin of the idea of (basically one-sided) responsibility in general.[12]

I think it absolutely crucial here to recognize that this does not replace or displace the Kantian norm as having operative force for most *inter-adult* relationships; Jonas explicitly notes here the need for "reciprocal rights and duties" between "independent adults."

Here I wish to separate out and lay emphasis on what I take to be Jonas's valid and valuable point about children, about the limits of the autonomy norm when non-adults are involved, and about how this can serve as a heuristic for articulating a desperately needed ethic of intergenerational responsibility. (Below I will suggest how the Japanese discussion can help insure that what is of value here does not get rejected or lost.) I proceed here by claiming that what has been persuasively demonstrated by Jonas concerning large bioethical and ecological matters not be tightly tied to what he seems to have written—and written far less persuasively—about statesmen and politicians. An unfortunate and unnecessary linkage could result in throwing the former into jeopardy because of likely flaws in the latter.

For instance, in a recent essay on Jonas, Dmitri Nikulin calls attention to what Richard Bernstein had earlier found problematic in a key section of *The Imperative of Responsibility*—specifically, that portion of the work where Jonas's objection to isolating *Sollen* from *Sein* jumps from his point about parents having a natural authority to what Jonas takes as a parallel responsibility on the part of statesmen. Bernstein raises a reasonable question:

[11] Ibid., 130–31.
[12] Ibid., 39.

> Why not recognize—contra Jonas—that there is *not* a single paradigm or archetype of responsibility?... To insist that "parental responsibility, which really, in time and in essence, is the archetype of all responsibility" tempts one to think of statesmanship in an essentially paternalistic (or maternalistic) manner. We know all too well from history how this can be degrading or worse—failing to treat human beings with the full respect and dignity that they deserve.[13]

I concur that there is enough ambiguity in this portion of Jonas's work to justify Bernstein's raising of the question. Jonas was less than clear about what he meant by "archetype" here; in the German version of these passages, where the term *Urbild* frequently appears, its specific usage in the text seems closer to the notion of "primal image"—i.e., what one gains when *looking* at an infant in need of total care by its parent. But it is true that Jonas also uses "archetype" in English and *Archetyp* in German—thus using a term suggesting a more active and pervasive role. Bernstein recognized that these are words and concepts used by Jonas with less precision than usual. Nevertheless Bernstein is cautious and judicious in his own phrasing. He writes that Jonas's phrasing "*tempts one to think*" that it might have been meant to be applicable in politics and, *if* so intended, it would be endorsing a paternalistic polity there.

Richard Wolin dives into this in a strikingly different manner. Where Bernstein respects an ambiguity and speculates about a *possible* reading, Wolin arrives with no taste for nuance, with one-sided readings, and with snap judgments. And he sometimes twists things arbitrarily. For instance, whereas Jonas, in order to provide an instance of a meaningful exception to the autonomy rule, had pointed to the universality *of the experience* of parents seeing that their newborn cannot function autonomously, Wolin simply wants us to believe that the universality intended by Jonas is one of the applicability of a parent-like "paternalism" to *all human relationships*. With no textual basis for doing so, he writes of how Jonas must have wanted this to be a universalizable *model*. And on this misconstrual he launches his objection:

> But the problems involved in trying to establish values on the basis of facts haunt Jonas's analysis. It is not the fact that there are many historical

[13] Richard Bernstein, "Rethinking Responsibility," *Hastings Center Report* 25, no. 7 (1995): 13–20, here 17. See Dimitri Nikulin, "Reconsidering Responsibility: Hans Jonas' Imperative for a New Ethics," *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 23, no. 1 (2001): 99–118, here 115–16.

> and empirical exceptions to the parent-child bond that undermine its plausibility (hence, its universality) as a model. Instead, the problems pertain to the lack of generalizability of the model itself. The very uniqueness of the rapport between parent and child interferes with the prospect of transposing it to extra-familial settings. Its exclusive nature poses serious obstacles to extending it to other human relationships, let alone humanity in general.[14]

Wolin would have the case of children be so "unique" that it may not disturb his own generalizable model. He then goes on to impute to Jonas a long list of political thought-sins: "authoritarian overtones," an "indebtedness to the antidemocratic prejudices of Plato's doctrine of the philosopher-king," a "fascination with the lures of political autocracy," and so forth.[15]

4. *Sein, Sollen, and the Future*

One will find, however, no reference in Jonas's text to either a need or a right for us to take the parent-child relationship as having "universality as a model" or applicable to "humanity in general." Jonas explicitly wanted to find *an exception* to the universalizability of autonomy rule, but Wolin imputes to him the notion that what Jonas had discovered in this exception now was pushed by him to become the new rule, now itself globally applicable. This is not what Jonas had written. I do not want to deny that Jonas, by placing a discussion of statesmen and politics next to what he had written about parents and children makes it look like the political realm too might be one where the autonomy rule was problematic. And I share the wish that Jonas had shown with greater clarity what may be both similar and dissimilar in the role of parent and that of statesman. The ambiguity to which Bernstein points is real and regrettable.

My own suggestion is that, however important it may be to clarify what may or may not be licit "paternalism" in the political realm, what we can even say at this point—and say unambiguously—about the significance of Jonas in circumscribed areas is both clear and important. We dare not avoid the significance of what Jonas wrote about the responsibility of individual parents to their utterly dependent,

[14] Wolin, *Heidegger's Children*, 122.
[15] Ibid., 126–28.

non-autonomous, infants and why it is totally appropriate to see this structure of dependency-cum-responsibility as the template for articulating the relationship between ourselves as a whole generation of humans and those of our progeny who will constitute the generations of the future humans. Precisely because what our generation does now—to the human gene pool and to what we call our "environment," for instance—will by the nature of the case have a non-reciprocal impact upon their generations, we dare not shirk the reality of our responsibility. In a word, whether we like it or not, our generation is to theirs *in locus parentis*. We have, that is, a moral obligation to embrace an ethic that goes beyond Kant's by complementing it with what Jonas called the "time dimension." Our obligations do not stop with responsibilities to our contemporaries and, although he may not so intend it, Wolin's objections can easily obscure the way in which Jonas's critique is an implicit critique of those politicians and economists whose policies today leave entirely to future generations the responsibility to deal with the problems they will face. What Jonas writes so brilliantly about *these* matters is not clouded by ambiguity.

And this is why Jonas's readers and interpreters in Japan are important. They have, at least to the extent that I have read them, been able to locate and focus on the primary matter here. Katô puts the matter precisely: "It is Hans Jonas who articulated a viewpoint concerning the [responsibility] that the present generation has for the conditions of later ones.... What is exposed in this is the whole question whether an ethics based solely upon responsibilities reciprocated within a single generation can be an adequate basis for morality."[16]

I am, moreover, especially interested in the following—namely, the fact that it is possible to find within the Japanese discussions of ethics, even well *before* any knowledge of Jonas was present in Japan, an almost uncannily exact parallel to the structure of linked concerns in Jonas. That is, we can locate there an articulated interest in linking the following items: the existence of children as a problem for the autonomy norm; problems in holding that what Is (*Sein*) may never impinge on what Ought to be (*Sollen*); and the ingredients of an ethic of intergenerational responsibility.

[16] Katô, *Nôshi, kurôn, idenshi chiryô*, 25–26. It is probably no mere coincidence that Katô, surely a catalyst for the wide Japanese appreciation of Jonas, was selected to serve as the first president of a new university, Tottori University of Environmental Studies, one foregrounding ecological studies and preservation.

But, of course, what seems almost "uncanny" in the degree to which items line up in parallel formation here may simply be due to logical, not historical connections. The evidence for my claim here will be taken from the works of Tetsurô Watsuji (1889–1960), widely regarded both in Japan and among Japan specialists abroad as the first Japanese philosopher in the modern era to focus largely on ethics, to discuss and analyze European and American writings on this topic, and to attempt to compare them with perspectives on ethics found in the classics and traditions of East Asia. Watsuji went to Europe in 1927 but returned the next year. He purportedly had intended to study with Heidegger but never did. And on his return to Japan, Watsuji wrote criticisms of the famous German philosopher. Within Watsuji's published works—twenty-seven major volumes plus addenda—are studies of Nietzsche and Kierkegaard, writings on the ethics of early Buddhism, a treatise on Confucius, a two-volume history of ethical thought in Japan, and his widely-cited constructive and systematic *Ethics*, a work titled *Rinrigaku* in Japanese. Watsuji, a professor of ethics at Tokyo University, trained a generation of scholars. Critical studies of his work and influence continue to be published regularly in Japan today.

What is often cited as distinctive in Watsuji's ethics is his stress on humans as beings who from the outset are *in relationship* with one another. Consistent with views shared within both Buddhism and Confucianism, Watsuji deemed it an error to postulate the existence of discretely independent and individual persons who then go about forming relationships—as if such relationships were a secondary, volitionally constructed something and not intrinsic to the very existence of the human being at birth. This, of course, led directly to issues on which Watsuji felt compelled to differ with much in the tradition of the modern West and with Kant most particularly. In a portion of his *Rinrigaku* that has been translated into English we find Watsuji writing as follows:

> Ethics is not only the study of the subject; it is also the study of the *subject as the practical interconnection of acts*. Given this recognition, the Kantian approach to ethics must appear insufficient. Kant took his departure from the facts of *immediate consciousness* in the *individual* and inquired into the self-determination of the subject practically disclosed in these facts. But the practical interconnection of acts includes the mutual understanding of subjects on a deeper level than is the case with the consciousness of the obligation of the individual. On the basis of these subjective connections, obligatory consciousness arises. And what is more, it arises on the ground of a definite betweenness; that is, on this basis, the relations of social ethics are established in the form of self-realization as a way of acting within this betweenness.[17]

Given this, it should come as no surprise that Watsuji took aim, like Jonas, at what he found inadequate in the universalized disjunction between what Is and what Ought to be, *Sein* and *Sollen*. He wrote:

> Therefore, an attempt to start from the ought-to-be consciousness of an individual involves the risk of burying in oblivion human relationships, which are, nonetheless, the basis of this consciousness and letting ethics degenerate into a science of subjective consciousness.[18]

That is, Watsuji wants to avoid losing the significance of *existing relationships* in too exclusive an attention to the individual and his or her subjective consciousness. He insists on the priority of the relationships; they, not to be overlooked or slighted, must be already in place before the consciousness of individuals, even a consciousness of obligation, can come into play. And because those relationships *are* there, they have a claim, even if not an absolute claim, to be included within what *ought* to be.

And, not surprisingly, what I have called the "problem" of children also comes to the fore in Watsuji. He argued that an infant exists within a context of relationships *without* yet having the consciousness requisite for being referred to as an "individual." In his *Rinrigaku* (*Ethics*) he noted that we may not assume that consciousness, volition, and cognition are expressed by the bodily movements of an infant. Yet, in spite of lacking these capacities, such an infant is clearly in a relationship with others, its parents most immediately.

An infant does not take a position as an individual vis-à-vis its mother or caregiver. No matter how cranky it may get, we do not suppose that the infant has somehow taken up a stance objecting to the very union it has with its protectors. Even though there is the potentiality

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[17] As translated by Yamamoto Seisaku and Robert E. Carter in *Watsuji Tetsurô's Rinrigaku: Ethics in Japan* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 33. I have italicized phrases which had been given emphasis in the original. Watsuji's earliest version was published in 1937, later revised and expanded, republished in 1962 and again in 1977—the one to which I refer here and in what follows. *Watsuji Tetsurô zenshû* [collected works, hereafter *WTZ*] (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1977), vol. 10, 35–36.

[18] Watsuji as translated by Yamamoto and Carter, ibid. The Japanese term *tôi*, used in philosophy as equivalent to the German *Sollen*, rendered in English as "ought-to-be," is in the original text here.

for eventual individuality in such an infant, such individuality is not yet really in existence at this point.[19]

This statement, although likely to run counter to the way many of us, out of sheer sentiment, might like to imagine intentionality behind the bodily actions of our own newborn infants, makes an important point and, upon consideration, appears to be valid. Watsuji provides a portrait of a recognizable inter-human relationship, that between a newborn and its parent or caregiver, even though on one side of it—namely, the infant's—there need be none of the features (consciousness, volition, and cognition) we ordinarily identify as those pertaining to the *subjectivity of an individual*. This is to say that a relationship, even a relationship within which an "ought" pertains on the part of parents and caregivers, can and does exist prior to, and independent of, individuated consciousness.

This, I claim, anticipated and matches the insight at which Jonas later arrived. What remains for me to demonstrate here is that this perspective, in Watsuji just as in Jonas, leads directly to certain conclusions about responsibilities on the part of a present generation vis-à-vis whole generations not yet born. That is, do we see in Watsuji the makings of what in Jonas has been called an ethics of intergenerational responsibility, specifically one with the future in view? I claim that we do and that it comes to a concrete articulation in what Watsuji writes about the *future-oriented* dimension of those practices in East Asia usually referred to by us as "ancestor reverence" or "filial piety." He wrote:

> In our conception of family [in Japan] those who are its members are not limited only to persons alive right now. By an ancient Japanese custom, every household must have a Buddhist altar at which ancestors are revered, and each year on the date of a parent's death, the family as a whole must observe this event by religious observances. At such times even a living parent must behave as a child before the shrine of deceased parents. Therefore, we can no longer say that the head of a house is an absolute head. Indeed, he may not make arbitrary decisions that affect his family and this is because his decisions are guided by the ancestors and his duty is to be today's preserver of that family which was received from his own forebears. *His obligation is to hand it on to progeny without having damaged it.*[20]

[19] Watsuji, *WTZ*, vol. 10, 251. My translation.
[20] *WTZ*, vol. 10, 93. Translation and emphasis are mine.

Here something extremely important is being noted about the ethical dimension of filial piety. And it is something commonly misconstrued both by many Christian missions in East Asia and even by some Chinese intellectuals who, during certain times within the twentieth century, denigrated this tradition as nothing more than a superstitious practice born out of an irrational fear of empirically dead and functionally inert ancestors. Watsuji, opposing such polemics, insisted on there being a *future-oriented* and *ethical* dimension that is a constitutive part of these practices. This orientation is in place in spite of the fact that, at least when viewed superficially, the rituals of filial piety appear to be directed solely to deceased ancestors and the past. Watsuji's point is that, merely by virtue of being present and a participant in such rites, the children and youth of each new generation are instructed in the importance of connecting the past with both the present and the future. An ethic, one that is intergenerational and construes responsibility along the dimension of time, is embodied within the rite itself.

5. *Jerusalem, Athens—and Kyoto*

In his own intellectual and cultural tradition Watsuji's view was scarcely that of maverick; in fact, he was in many ways providing a sophisticated articulation of a perspective widely shared within East Asia. And this is among the reasons why, I suggest, the views of Hans Jonas appear to have been understood and endorsed with such alacrity in Japan. Even though specific contemporary Japanese scholars have not, at least to my knowledge, given expression to the structural similarity between Jonas and Watsuji that I proffer here, there would have been in Japan, I claim, a predilection for a quick acknowledgment of the importance of an intergenerational ethics. In many ways Japan was probably an unusually receptive ground for the works and perspective of Jonas.

I wish to suggest that the above may assist in addressing an important question raised in scholarship on Jonas. It is the question concerning the degree to which there may be in Jonas's works the evidence of a distinctive influence from the traditions of Judaism. There can be no doubt, of course, that his experiences as a Jew, especially a Jewish intellectual with first-hand confrontation with the Third Reich, had a profound impact on his life and writing. Many of his own works attest to that. The question about the precise role of Judaism as a religious and philosophical tradition in Jonas, however, is admittedly more difficult

to answer in any definitive way. One way this often gets metonymically expressed, especially for any Jewish thinker such as Jonas with a strong grounding in classical Greek thought, is in terms of some kind of tension and/or relationship between "Jerusalem" and "Athens." In the case of Jonas, who had studied Gnosticism in depth and had a keen interest in the Hellenistic era, this is an especially interesting question.

Since I have no expertise in the study of Judaism, however, I leave to others the task of a comprehensive assessment. I note in passing that already in 1970 Robert Bellah hinted that, especially in matters of family connections, Confucian perspectives might be much closer to those of Judaism than are those of Christianity.[21] From what I have surveyed and analyzed above, however, I will draw out only one point: if we take seriously what I note above about a detectable affinity between Jonas's ethics of intergenerational responsibility and perhaps the strongest current in the ethics of East Asia, we have reason to suggest that at least in this portion of the Jonas oeuvre we have his articulation of a perspective that depends on *theology* in no way whatsoever. That is, whether one follows the thought trajectory of a Watsuji or, alternatively, the strikingly parallel one articulated by Jonas to arrive at virtually the same place, it is possible to construct an ethics of intergenerational responsibility on bases that are in no way contingent upon the existence of a god or gods. Scholars of the ethics of Confucianism and Buddhism, with some rare exceptions, are in agreement that these are non-theistic perspectives.

There can be no denying Jonas's interest in theology and Judaism; he wrote about both. Nevertheless, I hold that attention to how Japanese thinkers have welcomed what they see as his *central* importance can help rescue Jonas from being tagged—and, thus, dismissed—in our own society as a thinker so indebted to a theological perspective that his insights lose their validity for non-Jews and/or persons understanding themselves to be unqualifiedly secular. Here I fully agree with Lawrence Vogel who, while deeply interested in the Jewish components in Jonas's total opus, insisted that "Jonas does not take theology as necessary for overcoming nihilism" and that in him "rational metaphysics must be able

[21] Robert N. Bellah, "Father and Son in Christianity and Confucianism," in his *Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post-Traditional World* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970): 76–97, here 84.

to ground an imperative of responsibility without recourse to faith."[22] My point is that Japan's ethicists and bioethicists confirm this. That is, they assume that an ethics of transgenerational responsibility is primarily based on common truths that can be empirically known—namely, that humans today are constituted in a very large part by what once were the ancestors who lived before them and, on the other side of this, that our future progeny will be what they are largely because they will have inherited what and who we of the present are—unless, of course, catastrophe or decisions to change radically, even if only incrementally, this thread of intergenerational continuity were to intervene. This perspective, in many ways Confucian to the core and also agreed to by Buddhists, is free of references to deities. God, gods, and theological language have no place within it.

Even when, as in Watsuji's case, the actual geographic locus of philosophical work had been Tokyo, we in the West have, for various reasons, come to use "Kyoto" as the metonym for philosophical perspectives articulated within Japan. If so, we may ask: Where, then does Kyoto fit into the discussions of the Jonas in whom both a Jerusalem and an Athens are clear influences and factors? It would, of course, be absurd to imply that Jonas was in any way significantly influenced by Japanese philosophy. Nevertheless, the remarkably easy reception in Japan of the Jonasian perspective on intergenerational responsibilities is not without a message. And I take it to be that this reception gives strong support to the view that what is central to the Jonasian viewpoint has no necessary theological presuppositions or components.

6. *Keeping on Point*

Vittorio Hösle has noted that Jonas as a thinker was invariably puzzling "to those readers who always ask whether an author is a rightist or a leftist, which in Jonas's case, they were unable to discern."[23] This is a

[22] Lawrence Vogel, "Hans Jonas's Exodus: From German Existentialism to Post-Holocaust Theology," in Hans Jonas, *Mortality and Morality: A Search for the Good after Auschwitz*, ed. Lawrence Vogel (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 1–40, here 6. This is echoed in another recent and valuable work, David J. Levy, *Hans Jonas: The Integrity of Thinking* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002), esp. 89–94.

[23] Vittorio Hösle, "Ontology and Ethics in Hans Jonas," *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 23, no. 1 (2001): 31–50, here 32.

shrewd and accurate observation. And it is one that helps us understand what seems, upon close scrutiny, to be mistaken in the view of those in North America who would either, against the evidence, enlist Jonas into serving a rightist agenda or fault him for not being sufficiently "left." The accuracy of Hösle's astute observation can, I offer, be verified by looking at how, at least as I see them, Richard Wolin in one way and Leon Kass in another each skews Jonas's perspective in ways that deflect attention from its central point. One very regrettable result of such may be that Jonas's work has, at least not to date, gained in North America the level of attention it urgently deserves.

Leon R. Kass, who during 2002–2005 served as the chair of the President's Council on Bioethics, gave Jonas more public visibility in the United States than he had previously had—and this is largely because Kass, himself having become a public figure, claimed that Jonas had a major impact on his own thinking. This is no doubt true and Kass has written convincingly about how deeply he was influenced by Jonas's person and, among the latter's writings, the book entitled *The Phenomenon of Life*.[24]

The embrace of Jonas by Kass has, however, also had a downside for Jonas, especially because Kass himself took very controversial positions not only on the issue of stem-cell research but also more widely on reproduction. Thus it may be easy, even though incorrect, for the general public to assume that Kass's views on some of these issues would also have been those of Jonas. Lawrence Vogel has convincingly argued that Kass, while citing Jonas as his philosophical mentor in bioethics, went beyond Jonas in siding with right-to-life advocates and by offering "an interpretation of sexuality and reproduction based on Genesis to 'correct' Jonas's philosophy of nature."[25] To the extent, then, that the right-to-life position locates its own ideational bases in divine revelations concerning life and makes appeals to biblical authority, it goes *theological* and authoritarian in places where Jonas, in contrast to Kass, refrained from doing so.

That Jonas would have rejected both the neoconservative theology and the right-to-life stance of many in Kass's council has been substantiated by the philosopher's wife, Lore Jonas, who personally told

[24] Leon R. Kass, "Appreciating *The Phenomenon of Life*," *Hastings Center Report* 25, no. 7 (1995): 3–13.

[25] Lawrence Vogel, "Natural Law Judaism? The Genesis of Bioethics in Hans Jonas, Leo Strauss, and Leon Kass," *Hastings Center Report* 36, no. 3 (2006): 32–44, here 32.

me: "I lived for more than fifty years with Hans and know that he had no interest whatsoever in depriving a woman of her right to have an abortion if she felt such was needed."[26] Moreover, it is worth noting that in a 1992 interview published in *Der Spiegel*, Jonas referred to Pope John Paul II's stand against birth control as "a crime against global responsibility."[27] This is surely a strong statement of sharp dissociation from the combined Catholic and Evangelical viewpoint, namely, the theology-based one that informed the council's positions during much of the presidency of George W. Bush.

This, perhaps coincidentally, suggests another affinity between Jonas and most Japanese bioethicists, many of whom wish to monitor closely the ways in which newly emerging biotechnology may become injurious—even on a biological level—to intergenerational continuities but, at the same time, would insist on decoupling such concerns from the right-to-life agenda or political efforts to recriminalize abortion. One simple difference noted by the Japanese is that abortion and contraception appear to have been included within the practices of humans for as long as we know and have largely predictable outcomes, whereas newly developed technologies of all kinds are by definition new and invariably have unforeseen consequences that might incrementally change the nature of our species—and during a time while we were almost totally unaware that such had been taking place.[28]

I hold that it would be deeply unfortunate, perhaps even tragic, if the right-to-life movement's strident rhetoric and its narrowed focus on the *old* but perennial problem of abortion were to succeed in deflecting attention away from what Jonas had to say of vital importance about the responsibilities forced upon us by our *new* technologies and their

[26] Personal communication, December 2, 2005.

[27] German: "ein Verbrechen gegen Weltverantwortung," in an interview with Jonas, "Dem bösen Ende näher," *Der Spiegel*, May 11, 1992, 92–107, 103. This interview has now been translated by Matthias Matussek and Wolfgang Kaden and published as "Closer to the Bitter End," *Graduate Faculty Philosophy Journal* 23, no. 1 (2001): 21–30, here 27.

[28] For the presentation of an argument why, from a Japanese perspective, abortion should be countenanced and legal and, moreover, does not present problems comparable in seriousness to some of the issues raised by emerging biotechnologies, see Susumu Shimazono, "Why Must We Be Prudent in Research Using Human Embryos? Differing Views of Human Dignity," in *Dark Medicine: Rationalizing Unethical Medical Research*, ed. William R. LaFleur, Gernot Böhme, and Susumu Shimazono (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 201–22. On abortion in Japan, see my *Liquid Life: Abortion and Buddhism in Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

potential for forcing upon our progeny new and perhaps ultimately unwanted changes in the nature and experience of being human.

What is "conservative" in Jonas has nothing to do with the issues and rhetoric of opponents of abortion. But it has all to do with the high value his ethics placed upon *preservation*—of both our environment and of what we biologically are as a species—down through time so that future generations would not only live in a world comparable to our own but also *be* a species whose genetic makeup, biological rhythms, and reproductive mode would also be basically continuous with our own. The natural correlate of efforts to preserve our environment is the preservation of the kind of humans living within that environment. Jonas's genius lay in seeing and insisting on this connection.

Although Jonas himself does not say so, the kind of paternalism to which we probably should today be objecting is the one implicit in the new eugenicists' insistence that there is nothing problematic in reshaping our progeny genetically. This form of eugenics, now trying to shed the opprobrium that this term had had from the time of the Third Reich, is touted now as "liberal" because it involves "choice," not coercion. But, of course, the choice—that is, the autonomy—here is all on the side of the parents as selectors of their children's genetic makeup. By contrast, those most affected by those choices will, by virtue of not yet being born, have absolutely no voice in making them. The irony, as pointed out by Katô,[29] is that our current bioethics will decry even the hint of paternalism when practiced by an individual physician but will, by virtue of the technologies developed, sanctioned, and used, demonstrate what should be seen as a technology-driven and *institutionalized paternalism*, one in which our generation makes decisions whose greatest, almost exclusive, impact will be upon persons, perhaps whole populations, of the future.

I have already referred to what I see as problems in Wolin's way of reading Jonas and how these prevent him from recognizing what is truly innovative and urgently relevant in what the philosopher wrote about Is and Ought, about children and autonomy, and about the need for supplementing Kantian ethics with one that also takes time-spanning linkages and responsibilities with utter seriousness. Wolin's

[29] Hisatake Katô, *Nôshi, kurôn, idenshi chiryô* (Tokyo: PHP Shinsho, 1999), 173–74. See also my "More Information, Broader Dissent on Informed Consent," *The American Journal of Bioethics* 6, no. 1 (2006): 15–16.

essay on Jonas, perhaps overly determined by the theme of a book titled *Heidegger's Children*, makes much of what he sees as the unacknowledged but continuing Heideggerian proclivities in Jonas's thought. Aside from pointing out the important role played by Jonas in 1964 by dramatically calling the attention of American Heideggerians to their hero's Nazism,[30] there is in Wolin's account no substantive reference to the multiple ways in which Jonas located and wrote in detail about serious flaws in his early mentor's *philosophy*. Jonas's extensive critique of Heidegger appearing in 1996[31] receives no mention in Wolin's 2001 account. And perhaps this is why Wolin rather blithely presents Jonas as something of a closeted Heideggerian—in addition to being an inveterate philosophical "pessimist," someone in whom we can detect "the return of a disconsolate, Spenglerian sensibility that was widespread in Germany during the 1920s on both the left and right sides of the political spectrum,"[32] and one whose "thought one might describe as Hobbesian" because it is "predicated on a pessimistic philosophical anthropology."[33]

Often where in Jonas's writing we can see him raising the kinds of questions that are absolutely appropriate for a socially and politically engaged philosopher, Wolin interprets him as already providing answers that are counsels of despair. When in an interview in *Der Spiegel* in 1992 Jonas raised perfectly relevant questions about whether our societies will be able to sustain their present interest in pursuing technological progress while providing ever increased individual freedom,[34] Wolin judges Jonas to be engaging in "yet another nightmarish thought experiment."[35] And, apparently eager that nothing contradict his judgment of Jonas as an unalloyed pessimist, Wolin makes no reference to Jonas's statement: "All I am saying is that there is no absolute certainty of coming disaster."[36] Jonas was issuing both a call for attention to trajectories likely to lead to dire consequences and the prospect that, if serious measures were taken, disaster surely could be averted.

Jonas's was, at least in my view, a wholly defensible perspective.

[30] Wolin, *Heideggers Children*, 101–4.
[31] Jonas, *Mortality and Morality*, passim.
[32] Wolin, *Heidegger's Children*, 129.
[33] Ibid., 121.
[34] Interview in *Der Spiegel*, 101. English translation, 26.
[35] Wolin, *Heidegger's Children*, 129.
[36] *Der Spiegel*, 99; English translation, 24.

Between the publication of Wolin's book in 2001 and the time I am writing this, there has been even in the United States a much heightened awareness of our global ecological crisis, one of the many things that decades ago Jonas saw as something with which our generation would be ultimately forced to deal. Even persons and groups who long dismissed the realities of global warming have begun to recognize its threat. Although not yet worked sufficiently into the consciousness of our own politicians, we can see among them some initial grasp of the core Jonasian point—namely, that our generation bears a deep responsibility for what subsequent generations will receive—and be! And this applies to what we hand down to them both in terms of the kind of biologically given human nature we will or will not be able to share and the environment in which they will live long after we no longer do. With sufficient public and global attention to this central issue, the lives of our progeny can, Jonas insisted, surely be saved from catastrophe.

PART THREE

RESPONSES AND REFLECTIONS

CHAPTER NINETEEN

REFLECTIONS ON THE PLACE OF GNOSTICISM AND ETHICS IN THE THOUGHT OF HANS JONAS

Kalman P. Bland

My response to the articles of Benjamin Lazier and Micha H. Werner cannot do justice to their richness. I cannot repay adequately the debt I owe them. I can, however, make a small deposit in earnest. I offer a tentative and perhaps convoluted answer to a simple question: Is there something constant, essential, or abiding in the thought of Hans Jonas? Might that something be the ethics of responsibility or "overcoming Gnosticism", as Lazier's original title put it? Transposing my question into spatial terms yields this result: In the architectonic floor plan of Jonas's thought, what are the place and function of ethics and Gnosticism?

Over the past several months, in preparation for this conference, I've been renewing acquaintance with some old and trusted companions. I've been rereading major sections from *The Phenomenon of Life* and *The Gnostic Religion.* I've also been reading for the first time several essays and chapters that will inhabit my thinking for years to come. Among the new companions called to our attention by Benjamin Lazier was a stunning passage, an apocalypse, delivered by Hans Jonas in Italy six days before his death on February 5, 1993:

> It was once religion which told us that we are all sinners, because of original sin. It is now the ecology of our planet which pronounces us all to be sinners because of the excessive exploits of human inventiveness. It was once religion which threatened us with a last judgment at the end of days. It is now our tortured planet which predicts the arrival of such a day without any heavenly intervention. The latest revelation—from no Mount Sinai, from no Mount of the Sermon, from no Bo (tree of Buddha)—is the outcry of mute things themselves that we must heed by curbing our powers over creation, lest we perish together on a wasteland of what was creation.[1]

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[1] Hans Jonas, "Epilogue: The Outcry of Mute Things," in idem, *Mortality and Morality: A Search for the Good after Auschwitz*, ed. Lawrence Vogel (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1996), 198–202, here 201–2.

The phrase "curbing our powers" sounds natural coming from the author of a mythological fable depicting the "ground of being, or the Divine" stripping itself of power, relinquishing its capacity for "extramundane providence," and "effacing [it]self for the world."[2] As went the deity, so ought the human go, in *imitatio dei* by way of self-restraint. The phrase "outcry of mute things themselves that we must heed" also seems natural coming from the author of a passage cited by Micha Werner:

> From the immanent direction of [nature's ongoing] total evolution there may be elicited a destination of man by whose terms the person, in the act of fulfilling himself, would at the same time realize a concern of universal substance. Hence would result a principle of ethics which is ultimately grounded neither in the autonomy of the self nor in the needs of the community, but in an objective assignment by the nature of things (what theology used to call the *ordo creationis*) such as could still be kept faith by the last of a dying mankind in his final solicitude.[3]

From 1966, when these ethical thoughts were published, to 1993, when Jonas penned the phrase "the outcry of mute things themselves," the line seems unbroken. The ligaments linking cosmology and ethical responsibility seem supple and persistent in Jonas's work. The convergence of ontology, or natural science, with ethics appears to constitute the weight-bearing walls, hub, or stabilizing center of gravity for his various intellectual pursuits. So far, we seem to know what Jonas knew and when he knew it. Then again, perhaps not.

Back in the 1920s and early 1930s, when Jonas was swirling in the circles and vortices of Weimar, when he was a student of Husserl, Bultmann, and Heidegger, when he was a young researcher publishing enviably erudite studies of Gnosticism and Augustine's polemics against the Pelagians, could anyone, including Jonas, ever have predicted that this brilliant student of late antiquity and scholarly historian of ideas would one day write quasi-, neo-kabbalistic myths about the self-effacing God or insist that humanity meet its ethical responsibility to "curb our powers of creation" and "heed the outcry of mute things?" I think

[2] Hans Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life: Toward a Philosophical Biology* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), 275–77. The myth appears in other venues, as well. See idem, "Immortality and the Modern Temper," in idem, *Mortality and Morality*, 115–30, here 125–27; idem, "The Concept of God after Auschwitz," in *Out of the Whirlwind*, ed. Albert H. Friedlander (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1968), here 465–68; and idem, "The Concept of God after Auschwitz: A Jewish Voice," in *Mortality and Morality*, 131–43, here 134–36.

[3] Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 283.

not. Jonas insisted that, because life is loaded with contingencies, life cannot be foretold. He also registered surprise and perhaps pride over unanticipated seismic shifts in his heartland. In 1974, in the introduction to his *Philosophical Essays*, Jonas charted three stages in his development and confessed to the post-Holocaust, post-Hiroshima, profoundly existential transition that occurred between stages two and three: his shift from "theoretical detachment to public responsibility."[4]

Micha Werner's discussion of "Buber, Levinas, and Jonas on Responsibility" is therefore a welcome contribution to our grasp of the essential Jonas, but not to the whole of Jonas—only the later Jonas. One tentative historiographical conclusion to be drawn from this framing of Micha's keenly philosophical article is that there is no essential or "abiding" Jonas to be had, only a protean, evolutionary, "becoming" Jonas scrupulously to be described in his varying stages of development. There is nothing permanent or "always" in Jonas, just as there is nothing permanent or "always" in the history of ideas as described by Jonas, who was meticulously attuned to history's disjunctures and discontinuities.

I will now contradict myself. A counter argument, pivoting on the "always," indicating an essential Jonas, may lurk in an autobiographical remark describing his philosophical odyssey. Odyssey: no other term will do, not unless it were equally Hellenic, fraught with mortal dangers, and heroic. The remark surfaces in one of his frequent discussions of the "modern temper," specifically "the modern temper's response to the distinction of appearance and reality." "I have always felt," Jonas declared in 1961,

> that the idealistic philosophers who professed it may have been too sheltered from the shock of the external, so that they could regard it as spectacle, a representation on stage. They certainly do less than honor to what they demote to mere appearance. We hard-pressed children of the now insist on taking it seriously.[5]

If this remark is to be taken at face value, if Jonas is not retrojecting his second- and third-stage philosophizing upon his earlier intellectual horizons, then Jonas was "always" opposed to philosophic idealism,

[4] Hans Jonas, *Philosophical Essays: From Ancient Creed to Technological Man* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1974), xvi.

[5] Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 267, and idem, "Immortality and the Modern Temper," 118.

"always" shocked by the external, and "always" to be found among the hard-pressed children of the now. "Always" would imply long before Hitler's rise to power, long before Heidegger's betrayals of humanity and philosophy, long before Jonas's active duty service on the front lines of wars in Europe and Palestine, long before Hiroshima, and long before technology and various economic regimes threatened to destroy the fragile ecology of our planet, silencing the outcry of mute things.

Of course, opposition to the epistemology of idealism because one honors the material world which includes the psychophysical proposition that "I am hungry" is merely the tip of an immense iceberg.[6] Call that iceberg Jonas's brand of philosophy, another contender for defining a timeless, essential Jonas, if one exists. In one corner of the ring, described with breathtaking clarity by Benjamin Lazier, stands the violent, dualistic, morally reprehensible, anti-worldly champion, Gnosticism, and its latter-day shadow, Heidegger; in the other corner stands the contender, classically Hellenic, metaphysically saturated, ethically steeped philosophy. Dialectically signaling my immense debt to Benjamin Lazier's article, I suggest that the Jonas Syndrome, if such exists, may be dubbed "Overcoming Perversions of Philosophy." Preeminent among the perverts are Descartes, Heidegger, linguistic analysis, and the Viennese School, including Wittgenstein. Whether or not "Overcoming Perversions of Philosophy" is synonymous with "Overcoming Gnosticism" is a question I pose for our ensuing discussion. Which of the two overcomings was the essence, the constant in all of Jonas's diverse navigational maneuvers for evading the Scylla of idealism and the Charybdis of materialism? Regarding the Gnostic Syndrome, Jonas cautioned us to be prepared for the possible discovery of "a nucleus surrounded by a less definite halo."[7] In our case, which overcoming is the nucleus and which the less definite halo? Bad philosophy or Gnosticism? In Jonas's opinion, which is the worst possible scenario and the enemy most demanding our undivided attention: the existentialists and their allies, the atheistic naturalists, who proclaim that life is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing? or the Gnostics who shriek that life is a tale told by demonic knaves, full of sound and

[6] Hans Jonas, "Philosophy at the End of the Century: Retrospect and Prospect," in idem, *Mortality and Morality*, 41–55, here 44.

[7] Hans Jonas, "The Gnostic Syndrome: Typology of its Thought, Imagination, and Mood," in idem, *Philosophical Essays: From Ancient Creed to Technological Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 263–76, here 264.

fury, signifying alienation?[8] Which "overcoming" entails or subsumes the other? Must the overcoming be total? Did not Jonas seek to overcome Gnosticism because he was defending the right kind of philosophy, at all costs, even if it meant a partial succumbing to certain aspects of Gnosticism, most notably its mythological habits of mind and its Dorian Gray—like doctrine of astral garment in order to impress upon us the cosmic and everlasting implications of human deeds?[9] After all is said and done, is not Gnosticism closer in time and more conceptually continuous with the elements of Hellenic cosmology, metaphysics, and imagination which it absorbed and transformed than the so-called philosophy of Heidegger or the banality of logical positivism?

To gather a quick impression of what Jonas considered philosophy rightfully to be and therefore the nucleus of his life's work, consider a passage found toward the end of the essay, "Matter, Mind, and Creation," made available in the volume edited by Lawrence Vogel, *Mortality and Morality*. The passage, perhaps merely another misleading retrojection, originally delivered and published in 1988, read in the light of Lazier's article and illumined by Jonas's emphatic assertion that he was a philosopher but not a theologian,[10] leads me to conclude that the ultimate purpose directing Jonas's work was to keep himself and the modern world safe for philosophy of the correct kind. Or, would it be more accurate to say, to keep philosophy safe from the world? The passage reads as follows:

> Of course, every attempt to get a grip on the riddle of the universe must end in disrepute. But this must ever be risked anew, each time as a different and unique venture, and mitigated by the consolation that at least in doing so one finds oneself in good company, even in the best company of all: that of the *philosophia perennis*. My own attempt, undertaken with far weaker powers, to find my way back to this company, can be seen as presumptuous of me. Yet there is one grain of humility that must be allowed my endeavor, for I simply cannot believe that all those great thinkers, from Plato to Spinoza, Leibniz, Hegel, and so forth, were blind and foolish, and that only we today, thanks to the Vienna Circle, have become clever and wise. They dared to ask speculative questions

[8] Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 265.

[9] Jonas, "Immortality and the Modern Temper," 123.

[10] For an example of Jonas's self-description as "not a theologian but a philosopher," see Hans Jonas, "Is Faith Still Possible?: Memories of Rudolf Bultmann and Reflections on the Philosophical Aspects of His Work," in idem, *Mortality and Morality*, 144–64, here 144.

> concerning the whole; for that they do not deserve criticism, but eternal thanks. Our criticism must test how their answers stand fast before our later ontological evidence. But we must go to school with them and through them in order to learn how to ask questions and to be instructed by their victories and defeats.[11]

Please forgive the following argument from and about silence. Such arguments are always tenuous. They are also irresistible. This one notices that philosophers, but not traditional Jewish thinkers, are called "the best company of all" with whom "we must go to school." The argument from silence also hinges on the "and so forth." No figure after Hegel warrants mentioning. "From Plato to Spinoza, Leibniz, Hegel, and so forth" dumps prominent figures in Jonas's intellectual odyssey like Rene Descartes, Immanuel Kant, and Edmund Husserl in the unspecified category of "and so forth." Their anonymity is not troubling. When it comes to Hans Jonas, who attempted "to find his way back to [Plato and] company" without ever telling us explicitly when or why he abandoned them, Descartes, Kant, and Husserl may perhaps go without saying. That Martin Heidegger is consigned to oblivion, going unmentioned in the list, by contrast, seems utterly remarkable. Heidegger seems a looming presence made conspicuous by his name's absence, perhaps an ironic compliment paid by Jonas to Heidegger's murky notion of truth by way of concealment, perhaps another way for Jonas to repudiate Heidegger's disgraceful betrayal of humanity and true philosophy. Like Heidegger, David Hume goes unmentioned in the list. That Jonas failed to name Hume also seems remarkable and noteworthy, but for different reasons. Was Jonas mindful of conceptual affinities between the empiricist Hume and the Vienna School whose positivistic distaste for natural theologies displeased Jonas? Was Hume perhaps filed away by Jonas in the same mental compartment where Wittgenstein was stored along with all the other anti-metaphysicians who enjoined silence "whereof one cannot speak"[12] and "forbade us" to raise questions for which "there can be no verifiable answers"?[13]

Enough arguing from silence. Let Jonas himself declare explicitly what he meant by philosophy, supplementing the remarks of 1988 regarding

[11] Hans Jonas, "Matter, Mind, and Creation: Cosmological Evidence and Cosmogonic Speculation," in idem, *Mortality and Morality*, 165–97, here 194.

[12] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. C. K. Ogden (London and New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 189.

[13] Jonas, "Philosophy at the End of the Century," 55.

"speculative questions concerning the whole" with comments he made in 1992, one year before his death: "Until now [philosophy] has posed questions about the good life of the individual, about the good society, about the good state. Since its beginnings, it has always concerned itself with human actions insofar as these occurred between human beings, but scarcely ever with the human individual as an acting force in nature. But now the time for this has come."[14] Taken together, all these passages suggest that for Jonas philosophy is what the anti-metaphysical, ethically insouciant positivism of the Vienna School isn't. For this reason, I am tempted to throw caution to the wind and call Jonas's central project "Overcoming Positivism" or perhaps "Finding the Way Back to Metaphysics," not merely "Overcoming Gnosticism," since to its credit Gnosticism only debauched but never repudiated perennial metaphysics. Moreover, to succeed in overcoming Gnosticism is not tantamount to debunking pernicious pantheisms or deflating obtuse materialisms.

Succumbing to this temptation, I will bolster its claims by providing Jonas's central project with a precise historical context. Using fire of lesser intensity in hopes of matching Lazier's persuasive references to Hans Blumenberg and Karl Barth, I find Theodor W. Adorno coming to mind. I invoke the opening lines of *Minima Moralia*. They invite us to map Jonas against Adorno, as we search for genealogical commonalities and harmonic differences. Adorno:

> The melancholy science from which I make this offering to my friend relates to a region that from time immemorial was regarded as the true field of philosophy, but which, since the latter's conversion into method, has lapsed into intellectual neglect, sententious whimsy and finally oblivion: the teaching of the good life.[15]

If by the "good life," the same phrase employed by Jonas and Adorno, Adorno meant anything close to the ethically responsible life defended by Hans Jonas, then would not Jonas embrace Adorno as his comrade in arms, just as he would celebrate both Adorno's veneration for the true field of philosophy from time immemorial and Adorno's devastating critique of Positivism?

[14] Ibid., 53.

[15] Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from a Damaged Life*, trans. Edmund F. N. Jephcott (New York: Verso, 1974), 15. For the critique of positivism, see 126–28.

Were it not for Lazier's eloquent brief on behalf of "Overcoming Gnosticism," my understanding of Jonas would have remained impoverished. I would never have entertained the thought that "Overcoming Gnosticism" was a major component in Jonas's project. I therefore would never have been led to the possibility that "Overcoming Gnosticism" was the necessary, if not sufficient means by which Jonas sought to overcome the perversions of his first intellectual love, true philosophy. I therefore would never have caught a glimpse of Jonas's possible affiliations with Adorno. And were it not for Micha Werner's acute analysis of responsibility, I would never have recognized the distinctive profile of ethics in Jonas's philosophic vision. For this and more, I am truly grateful. More cautious than I, they prodded me into discerning a Jonas Syndrome far different from the one I conjured more than thirty-five years ago and retained until now. In graduate school, I was introduced to Hans Jonas, author of *The Gnostic Religion*, by my teacher, Professor Alexander Altmann. Back then, I assumed that Jonas was an exemplary intellectual historian. I am now convinced that Hans Jonas was something more monumental and noble: a philosopher, a philosopher in the line of Plato and Spinoza, a philosopher who refrained from "sententious whimsy," a philosopher who taught the "good life."

Coda: In former times, philosophy was understood to be the antagonist of painting and poetry and a preparation for death. Hans Jonas demurred. In our time, he insisted, philosophers must also behave like poets, composing mythic images, and join forces with the scholar in order to "reconstruct the vanished world and... bring its form to life." Hans Jonas named this philosophical deed "resuscitation."[16]

To resuscitate philosophy means denying literal-mindedness, sophistry, credulity, and gullibility any more victims. To resuscitate philosophy is to cultivate a vigorous distrust of language and reacquire robust immunities against the wiles of politicians and merchants. "Going to school" with George Orwell or the politically astute Hans Jonas, we learn that "in the age of the party line, and for that matter, of Madison Avenue, in the age of the universal corruption of the word, we are sadly aware that speech... is the medium of lies as well as truth, and more often the former than the latter in the public sphere."[17]

Hans Jonas insisted that exemplary philosophers of the good life, like Plato and Spinoza who were politically astute and suspicious of

[16] Hans Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), xiv.

[17] Jonas, *The Phenomenon of Life*, 265.

language, are "the best company of all." Jonas counseled that "we must go to school with them and through them in order to learn how to ask questions and to be instructed by their victories and defeats." "Going to school" with Hans Jonas therefore obliges us to ask questions, concede his defeats, and think *with* but not *like* him. Thinking *with* him, becoming philosophers concerned with "universal substance," or the "nature of things," the things of nature, we learn that "to transcend" ourselves and our limited circumstances means no escape into the "extramundane," or supernatural, but to establish a "relationship" with what is other or alien.[18]

The spirit, if not the letter, of resuscitation in the scientifically attuned, ethically responsible philosophy of Hans Jonas is captured in the following poem by Wisława Szymborska, a meditation on beetles, death, self-awareness, and transcendence. In this poem, "the outcry of mute things," the paradigmatic other, is made audible. I offer the poem as tribute worthy of a philosopher, Hans Jonas. It invites us to think *with* him. Its title is "Seen from Above."

A dead beetle lies on a dirt road.
Three pairs of legs are neatly folded against its belly.
Instead of the chaos of death—tidiness and order.
The horror of the sight is moderate,
the scope strictly local from crabgrass to peppermint.
Sorrow is not contagious. The sky is blue.

For our peace of mind, animals do not pass away,
But die a seemingly shallower death
losing—we'd like to believe—fewer feelings and less world,
exiting—or so it seems—a less tragic stage.
Their meek souls do not scare us at night,
they value distance,
they know their place.

So here it is: the dead beetle in the road
gleams unlamented at the sun.
A glance at it would be as good as a thought:
it seems nothing important happened here.
Important supposedly applies only to us.
Only to our life, only to our death,
a death which enjoys a forced right of way.[19]

[18] Ibid., 4–5.

[19] Wisława Szymborska, *Miracle Fair*, trans. Joanna Trzeciak (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001), 66.

CHAPTER TWENTY

ON MAKING PERSONS: PHILOSOPHY OF NATURE AND ETHICS

Frederick Ferré

At the conference on "Judaism and the Phenomenon of Life—The Legacy of Hans Jonas,"[1] we were fortunate to have been provided three excellent papers, laden with meaty issues that actually nourish one another and advance our appreciation of Hans Jonas. Strachan Donnelley illuminates Jonas's general organicist worldview—his ontological foundations—by exploring tensions and linkages with the intimately related Darwinist worldview of Ernst Mayr; Bernard Q. Prusak offers a subtle ethical analysis of how such an ontology, leading to a distinctive philosophical anthropology, might shape attitudes toward current biotechnological possibilities of human cloning; and Lawrence Vogel sensitively juxtaposes Jonas's own bioethics with the extensions and corrections offered by Jonas's most prominent Jewish student, the powerfully influential Leon R. Kass.

My own effort, in what follows, will be to highlight the links between these articles, moving from metaphysics, to ethics, to faith-based policy making; and, as I go, adding yet another voice to the clamor on cloning.

1. *Ontology of Persons*

Strachan Donnelley has laid down the ideal foundation for this discussion. The deep questions of the nature of nature, and, within this largest picture, the nature of *human* nature, are utterly fundamental to answering any further questions of ethics and policy. The deep, primary questions include the following:

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[1] "Judaism and the Phenomenon of Life—The Legacy of Hans Jonas," Arizona State University, Tempe, Arizona, November 5–7, 2005.

1. Are people made entirely of matter? If *not*, what is the "extra" nonmaterial ingredient? If *so*, what is matter's ultimate character?
2. Is everything material fully determined by its prior states under causal laws? Or are material things, at least in some configurations, capable of initiating causal sequences?
3. Is matter inherently lifeless? Or is matter at some levels of complexity capable of vitality, spontaneity, and creativity, without aid from nonmaterial supplementation?
4. Is matter completely "dark" within itself, lacking even a trace of subjectivity? Or is matter shot through with subjectivity, on a qualitative range from extremely dim but rising to the clarity of self-awareness, recognition of interests, concern for alternative outcomes?
5. Is matter indefinitely divisible into solitary bits? Or is matter inherently connective, interactive, even social?

The outstanding result of Donnelley's sensitive examination of Ernst Mayr's and Hans Jonas's independent approaches to the ontology of matter is that—for all their differences—the two, one non-Jewish and the other Jewish, joined forces to reject the popular modern portrait of matter, dominant since Descartes, as inert, void of subjectivity, and fully determined. In this they allied themselves with the continuing tradition of Alfred North Whitehead, which flows down to the present day and even to the present writer, who supports the conception of what might usefully be called "neomatter."[2] Materials scientists have forced us to look far beyond the theoretical assumptions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as they forge practical twenty-first century adhesives and plastics that demand models of matter as dynamic, interactive, and spontaneous. Beyond this, the stunning theoretical advances of quantum physics and the life sciences, importantly including ecology and ethology, underline the urgency of reforms demanded in the fundamental ontology of matter for any adequate contemporary philosophical approach to the nature of nature.

Jonas and Mayr were fully justified, then, in pushing ahead with their reasonable speculations, widely recognized today as far from groundless,

[2] Frederick Ferré, "The Matter with Matter," keynote address for the Nobel Conference XXXI, Gustavus Adolphus College, October 1995, published, with revisions, in "On Matter and Machines: an Environmental Speculation," *Research in Philosophy and Technology* 18 (1999): 131–42.

and in adopting similar metaphysical frameworks within which matter is neither inert nor wholly determined by prior conditions and causal laws. The "wider truth of things," in Donnelley's happy phrase (p. 271), contains more than is dreamt of in the halls of eliminative physicalism.

First, then, in answer to the earlier list of deep, primary questions, it is declared: *Yes*, human beings are made entirely of matter, but *not* of the dead stuff usually associated with materialism. With an enriched conception of neomatter, there is no need for another kind of immaterial stuff to animate the complex, pulsating material that constitutes our mind-drenched bodies. Here Mayr, though non-Jewish, was completely aligned with Jonas in the best tradition of Hebrew thought prior to the intrusion of Platonizing and Christian influences in Hellenistic and later times.

The second metaphysical question, on the strict determinism of material things (including persons) is firmly answered in the negative on the ontology of neomatter. Here Jonas offers the subtle concept of "needful freedom." Freedom is not absolute (*pace* Sartre and other existentialist friends), but it is effective to differing degrees within environmental constraints. Jonas focuses on organic entities, capable of choosing alternative behaviors within a wider dependency. A full metaphysics of neomatter, such as Whitehead's, might insist on some small trace of "needful freedom" within *all* material entities, though dimming to negligible importance in simplest material entities while reaching highly significant levels only in complex ones like organisms, especially persons. But since Jonas insists unambiguously on the effective, contextually constrained, freedom at least of organisms, there is no need to quarrel over whether some trace of this should be stipulated "all the way down" in nature as well.

The third question, on the issue of the lifelessness of nature, is linked closely to the prior question of degrees of freedom. Whitehead, for example, distinguishes "living" from "nonliving" entities entirely by the significance in them of spontaneous behavior. There can be no clear line drawn between living and nonliving things. Some are obviously vivacious; others show no important signs of spontaneity. For practical purposes it is possible to sort out the mainly living things from the mainly nonliving, physical background of stability, but even atoms manifest spontaneous change, sometimes. Were this not so, there would have been no story of the universe as the very gradually self-organizing incubator of clearly living things.

On the same principle of continuity over vast degrees of more and less, the question about subjectivity in nature, at least living nature, is answered affirmatively by Jonas. His "method of regression" from the primary evidence available to us—our own experience—is similar, at least as applied to living creatures, to Whitehead's "reformed subjectivist principle." We literally have no other first hand evidence of what it is like to be an entity. Whitehead would urge us to go further, to authorize analogies of experience for our deepest ontology, "all the way down." Talk of "emergence," he would claim, from Mayr, or of ontological "revolutions," from Jonas, remains empty talk ineffectively covering the fact that we are "ignoramus," as Donnelley puts it (p. 278). But these metaphysical differences, though important in other contexts, concern matters of degree. Subjectivity in nature, at least in animate nature, is authentic and effective.

Finally, the question of the natural connectedness of things needs answering, as well. Here Donnelley helpfully clarifies a key difference between Mayr and Jonas. Mayr as evolutionary ecologist sees everything connected to everything else and places more emphasis on "becoming" and on communities; Jonas as philosophical existentialist sees everything from inside, placing more emphasis on "being" and on phenomenological accounts of being a living organism and a responsible person from inside. But the two are reconcilable, within a Whiteheadian perspective, by taking "process" as fundamental to all being, and taking all beings as themselves completely social, largely constituted by other "felt" entities which mostly make up the fabric of whatever entity it may be.

2. *Engineering of Persons*

One of the things it may be, if present bioengineering trends continue, is a human clone. Probably there are none of these on earth at the present time, but it would be wise for us to be braced for a surprise announcement—from South Korea or Singapore, if not from Edinburgh or Boston—since technical difficulties are melting rapidly and motivations, if only to gain the glory of being first with the achievement, may prove irresistible. At any rate, I shall take my point of view from the day after—or the decade after—this announcement, when human clones are *faîtes accomplis*. A great deal of ink has been spilled trying to prevent or promote such a venture in human engineering; but assuming it has happened, what then shall we think?

In reply, we should first consider the metaphysics, then the ethics, of the situation posed. On the general ontological ground supported here by Jonas, Mayr, Whitehead, and the like, the cloned individual, as identical twin to its genetic donor, is not defective in any metaphysical way. The worry where the clone's "soul" would come from is an obvious red herring. There is no nonmaterial stuff required to come from anywhere in order that life and mind and moral character be fully acknowledged for this human being. The organism is *alive* because it functions with a high degree of spontaneity; the living clone is *thinking* because it is capable of taking account of self and of not-self, learning linguistic symbols for transcending the immediately given environment; it is *morally responsible* because it is capable of considering alternative responses to current events and, after deliberation, is capable of responding by initiating purposive actions, for better or for worse.

Norm-guided behavior, implied by genuine deliberation before purposive choice, further implies freedom of action within the limits of the situation: an instance of Jonas's "needful freedom." But this type of freedom is provided by the general ontology of neomatter. Which, of course, rules out *a fortiori* the tyranny of genetic determinism for clones as well as for other persons. Here Bernard Prusak rightly stands firm against arguments relying on exaggerations of the power of DNA to act as destiny in the making of personal life (p. 325). Jonas himself rejects the notion that "uniqueness of being" depends ontologically on uniqueness of genotype: "[If] there is a right to uniqueness, it is to uniqueness of being, of which uniqueness of genotype may or may not be a necessary condition: we just don't know. (I myself don't believe it is)."[3]

If this is so, then when a clone is found among us, he or she, when equipped with language and grown to moral maturity, will be fully personal. It will then be too late for hand-wringing. As Jonas prophesied concerning biological engineering: "Its deeds are irrevocable. When its results show, it is too late to do anything about it. What is done is done. You cannot recall persons nor scrap populations."[4] But we, as the generation of humans who will be the welcoming committee for such new kinds of persons, can look to our own moral obligations when confronted with such irrevocable facts. How should we respond?

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[3] Hans Jonas, "Biological Engineering—A Preview," in: *Philosophical Essays: From Ancient Creed to Technological Man* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1974), 160.

[4] Ibid., 144.

Given the ontological assurance that cloned human beings are in every sense *persons*, then some of the more extreme ethical nightmares may be allowed to vanish without extensive argument. For example, we need not take seriously the notion that "the clones" are a new class of entities, "zombies" lacking internal awareness and deserving no moral consideration. Or, for another example, we may be spared the related worry that clones could be bought or sold as manufactured commodities, or warehoused as living body parts to be harvested at will, or used in medical experiments. All these and similar scenarios are based on the premise that clones are utterly different from human persons, but the Jonas-Mayr-Whitehead ontology assures us that cloned persons will be entirely the same as ourselves, with rich subjective lives, moral responsibility, and intrinsic ethical worth.

The crucial topics in the ethics of cloning will shift, once cloned humans are found to be among us, from rehearsing consequentialist reasons for and against allowing this bioengineering practice, from analyzing the deontological qualities of motives, and from high minded hand-wringing, to examining the urgent moral imperatives to which we, the uncloned majority, should hold ourselves in welcoming and nurturing those newcomers whom Jonas describes, matter-of-factly, as "identical twins with a time lag."[5]

In brief, this must entail at the outset that we do our best to defend cloned persons from ignorant prejudice, based on mere "repugnance," and from consequent discrimination. All the human and civil rights we claim for ourselves must be extended to persons whose genetic story did not (immediately) involve fertilization by a sperm. This was through no fault of theirs, assuming it is a fault at all. At some point in the genetic chain a male was involved, just not in their individual embryonic history. Why, then the "repugnance"? Is the feeling fair? Should we adjust our attitudes?

If we take as our first principle in approaching cloned persons that we "prevent harm" to them from unjust and ignorant prejudice, should we also include under this heading an obligation to shield each clone from the knowledge of his or her genetic status, or at least from knowledge of the identity of his or her genetic "donor," the older identical twin? Jonas himself took this issue seriously as a possible means of defending cloned persons from what he considers the freedom-robbing

[5] Ibid., 156.

knowledge of just how the donor twin previously handled the challenges of fashioning a unique life. "Ignorance is here the precondition of freedom,"[6] he writes. But even as he deploys this argument, he wisely characterizes this supposedly destructive "knowledge" as only "putative,"[7] and later as "spurious,"[8] and indeed "false"—"there are reasons for saying that in essence it is false per se"[9]—so that the real enemy of personal authenticity is *false belief* that the future of the clone has been charted by the older twin. Against such false belief the remedy is not enforced ignorance, however, but enlightenment through better metaphysical education.

Thus from "do no harm" to "do good," the transition is quickly made. The best thing we philosophers can do, in order to enhance the richness and quality of life of any person who has developed to maturity from a cloned embryo, is to spread truth about the real situation. If our best arguments, carefully considered, lead us to accept the ontology of neomatter in place of modern reductionism, determinism, and behaviorism, our professional oaths demand that we defend the reality of subjective sensitivity, moral responsibility, intrinsic value, and social connectedness, for all persons, emphatically including clones.

3. *Theo-Politics of Persons*

Hans Jonas was a passionate thinker, one who could use fighting words like "slavish"[10] and "abomination"[11] against the very idea of cloning, but one who at the same time did not allow himself the pretense of infallibility or dogmatic certainty. His writings are shot through with cautions, some of which I have already quoted above, that "we just don't know"[12] one important matter or another. For example, concerning matters theological, specifically the soul, he writes: "An objective, enabling ground of individual uniqueness is in truth a metaphysical, not a physical, postulate (its name was once 'the soul') and as such is not only beyond finding out, but also transcendent to the whole

[6] Ibid., 159.
[7] Ibid., 161.
[8] Ibid., 162.
[9] Ibid.
[10] Ibid., 154.
[11] Ibid., 166.
[12] Ibid., 160.

question of rights, which it literally antecedes."[13] Or, again, on biological determinism, he prefers to back away from metaphysical either/or's and to explore the existential issue instead, saying: "[We] propose to treat of the *situation* of the human clone—an immanent matter of his experience and that of those around him: this makes for an existential, not a metaphysical, discourse, and one that can entirely waive the moot question of the extent of biological determinism."[14]

Lawrence Vogel has brilliantly shown us that this gentler, more tentative cognitive posture maintained by Jonas, despite his passionate views on the subject, strikes Leon Kass as a "defect" needing "correction" by calling on revelation and religious faith to hold the line against the would-be abominators. At the start of his article, Vogel poses the contrast. For Jonas, even though he has a supplementary Jewish theology, "his ethic does not depend on revelation. For Kass, on the other hand, a satisfactory account of human dignity must go *beyond* what 'unaided reason' can tell us about human nature" (p. 287). Once set upon this road away from arrogant, rational Athens and toward obedient, faithful Jerusalem—destinations seen, with Leo Strauss, as utterly irreconcilable in principle—Kass adds feminism and homosexuality to the list of abominations he zealously opposes, arm-in-arm with most evangelical Protestant fundamentalists and many Roman Catholics.

Vogel, while distancing himself from whole patriarchal neoconservative agenda in his discussion, wisely declines to offer a frontal attack. He does, however, clearly free Jonas from carrying the additional weight of this theo-political albatross and at the same time, deftly raises doubt about the legitimacy of Kass's claim for Jewish theological authority for his right-wing political policies.

I, too, must refrain from pursuing even tempting targets. Vogel has shown them to be at most tangentially related to Jonas's own central thinking; they are fortunately not his responsibility. Instead I shall conclude with a brief mention of the ways in which Jonas might have wished to "correct" Kass and, finally, one way in which Jonas today (or tomorrow, on the supposition made earlier) might wish to "correct" himself on the issue of cloning.

First, it is not the case that for Jonas his Jewish faith requires a *sacrificium intellectus*. For what good reasons must discourse between Athens and

[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.

Jerusalem be terminated? Are the pronouncements of Leo Strauss authority enough on which to scrap centuries of natural theology, philosophy of religion, philosophical theology, and millennia of midrash? Kass thinks natural reason too weak to buttress what he realizes are unpopular negative policies: anti-feminist, anti-gay, anti-stem cell research, and anti-cloning. Perhaps his teacher, Jonas, would remind Kass of the long-term resilience of reason, thanks to its grip on evidence and logic, in contrast to the rigid vulnerabilities to sudden collapse of authoritarian demands for blind obedience. Especially where public policy needs to be made in a democratic context, premises available in principle to all should stand behind policy decisions that affect all in vital ways.

Second, Jonas would offer a good corrective to the primarily deontological approach of theo-political decision-making, stressing a broad consequentialist concern for the well-being of all, clones and non-clones together, in thinking about the pluses and minuses of venturing toward this biotechnological horizon.

And, should human society suddenly be joined by persons with a different genetic history, by "twins with a time-lag," Jonas's profound concern for concrete personal experience might under those circumstances serve as a corrective even to his own strongly negative stance toward the practice of cloning. One can—should—doubt the wisdom of cloning without condemning clones. *My stance is not in favor of cloning; rather, I favor compassion—and fundamental fairness—for clones.* Jonas's own existential approach, after all, is not preoccupied with the physical mechanisms through which cloned persons may come into existence, or even with the motives that may bring them about, but rather with the experiential quality of any such existence. Once persons of this origin appear among us, the true followers of Jonas will feel deep sorrow—and anger, quite likely, at those responsible—but will set aside such regrets in order to embrace and support the infants (and, eventually, the youths and mature persons) who develop from this new genetic starting point. In nurturing the freedom and responsibility of every such person, in seeing the clones grow into productive, unique selves, as is their human birthright, the ethical and religious offspring of Hans Jonas will in this fresh way be honoring our species and affirming the transcendent worth not only of the phenomenon of life in general but (as Jonas urges) especially of humanity.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

PHILOSOPHICAL BIOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENTALISM

Carl Mitcham

One of the distinguishing features of Hans Jonas is his combination of philosophy, religion, politics, science, and technology in insightful thought and noble action. As a student in Germany in the 1920s, he studied under major figures in philosophy and theology, with a doctoral dissertation that adapted Martin Heidegger's *Daseinsanalyse* (analysis of Being) to demythologize early common-era Gnostic texts after the manner of Martin Bultmann's interpretation of the Greek Christian scriptures. His deconstruction revealed the extreme dualism and world estrangement of the Gnostic religious stance—a worldview toward which Jonas felt a complex attraction and repulsion. Increasingly aware during this same period of the social estrangement of Jews in Europe—his mother was to be murdered in Auschwitz—he joined the Zionist movement and as the Nazis came to power immigrated to Palestine. When World War II broke out he joined the Jewish Brigade of British forces in Italy as an artillery soldier and fought his way up the Italian peninsula. In 1948 he fought again in the Israeli War of Independence. I know of no other twentieth-century philosopher of stature who so clearly exhibited such physical bravery.

In the 1940s Jonas also began to reflect on the philosophical problems of modern science, especially biology. More profoundly than Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who sought to bring the lived body within the scope of phenomenological reflection, Jonas confronted the failure of phenomenology to incorporate an understanding of the unique being of plants (*phuta*) and animals (*zoa*). From the home front his wife, Eleanor, would send works on biology which he read and reflected on in the midst of his military campaigns. In the process he increasingly noticed parallels between the inimical cosmos of Gnostic belief and the conception of an indifferent cosmos implicit in modern natural science—an opposition that has contributed to the environmental challenges of the present, from biodiversity reduction to global climate change and aspirations to the biotechnological engineering of a post-humanity. In response he

undertook an ontological examination of the organism that led eventually to a fundamental ethical criticism of modern scientific technology. As is made clear in the posthumously published anthology *Mortality and Morality*,[1] his mature thought repeatedly sought to build a bridge between a philosophical-religious understanding of living beings that would eschew world alienation and the challenge of acting responsibly with a technology of unprecedented power. Thus it is most appropriate that these presentations by Martin Yaffe, Lawrence Troster, and Manfred Laubichler seek to explore and extend Jonas's thinking in relation to philosophical biology and environmentalism by considering as well the relation of his ideas and arguments to those of Baruch Spinoza, Aldo Leopold, and Ernst Cassirer, respectively.

All three articles witness the fundamental effort in modern philosophy to respond to the challenge of modern natural science with the development of an alternative to a reductionist or materialist understanding of the phenomenon of life, especially as this phenomenon is manifest in human beings. The enormous explanatory force and manipulative power of mechanistic and now molecular biology often appears to reduce life to complex material interactions and/or make life irrational and meaningless. This is a challenge to which all existentially serious twentieth-century philosophy has repeatedly responded. Henri Bergson, for instance, another philosopher of Jewish heritage and noble behavior, sought to address the problem by postulating at the core of organic evolutionary processes an unique *élan vital* that transcended strictly material interactions. In their turn, sociobiologists have argued for morality as another outcome of natural selection, with Edward O. Wilson, following Erich Fromm, going so far as to propose the existence of a sentiment of "biophilia" to ground a human appreciation and respect for the complexities and beauties of organic phenomena.[2] By contrast, affirming what he presents as the irreducible truth of a positivist scientific cosmology, Bertrand Russell in "A Free Man's Worship," first published in 1903, argued

> That Man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feeling, can preserve an individual life beyond the grave; that all the labours of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and that the whole temple of Man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins — all these things, if not quite beyond dispute, are yet so nearly certain, that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand. Only within the scaffolding of these truths, only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair, can the soul's habitation henceforth be safely built.[3]

For Russell, human beings must simply exercise a willed determination to do the best they can to humanize the world, while recognizing they will never fully succeed. Less compassionate nihilists such as Ernst Jünger simply celebrated a human destructive power for its imitation of natural forces. Pragmatists and others have likewise sometimes sought to turn the tables on science and technology by seeing them as forms of life—as an alternative to the passive acceptance of cosmological meaninglessness.

Clearly one of the most sophisticated and intelligent efforts to grapple with the life phenomenon grew out of a Germanic tradition of theoretical biology and philosophical anthropology as manifested in the thought of Cassirer, a peer of those under whom Jonas studied. Laubichler is especially good at retrieving and unpacking this background, which can be traced back to Johann Wolfgang Goethe. Jonas's own work in philosophical biology, he rightly argues, can productively be read as undertaken in dialogue with this tradition, and perhaps as one of its highest achievements. The work of Leon Kass, especially his *Toward a More Natural Science*, may also be situated within this framework.[4]

Additionally, however, it could be noted that the Germanic pursuit of a holistic science of living entities has influenced and been influenced by ethology as developed by Karl von Frisch, Konrad Lorenz, and Niko Tinbergen. For Lorenz, notoriously, his studies of animal behavior in the 1930s seemed to justify Nazism. When receiving the Nobel Prize in 1973 Lorenz apologized for his previous alliance, and subsequently drew on his scientific research to support Green Party environmentalism.

[1] Hans Jonas, *Mortality and Morality: A Search for the Good after Auschwitz*, ed. Lawrence Vogel (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1996).

[2] Edward O. Wilson, *Biophilia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984).

[3] Bertrand Russell, "A Free Man's Worship," in *The Basic Writing of Bertrand Russell, 1903–1959*, ed. Robert E. Egner and Lester E. Denonn (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1961), 66–72, here 67.

[4] Leon Kass, *Toward a More Natural Science: Biology and Human Affairs* (New York: Free Press, 1985).

Lorenz's shift suggests a deep ambivalence at the core of any holistic or philosophical biology, an ambivalence of which Jonas was more aware than others. Moreover, perhaps it is not too far-fetched to suggest that the question of how to view organic life in a way that would defend its integrity against scientific reductionism was in some respects paralleled by the question of assimilation—how Jewish life and existence was to be affirmed in the midst of the corrosive influence of secularization and assimilation.

The context of Jonas's existential biology should nevertheless not be restricted to the Germanic tradition of philosophical biology and anthropology. In what is the most philosophically informed of these three articles, with an insight and sensitivity to the issues similar to that of Jonas himself, Yaffe deftly considers the degree to which Jonas's philosophy of the organism was anticipated by the thought of Spinoza, the greatest Jewish philosopher of the early modern period. For Jonas, the continuity of metabolism as the ontological basis of all life allows the subjectivity that is perfected in humans to be read back into other more primitive organic forms. In a like manner, the continuity of anti-dualism in Spinoza and Jonas allows Jonas's philosophy of the organism to be found anticipated in Spinoza. More systematically and profoundly than the Germanic tradition of philosophical biology, Spinoza argued against mind-body dualism, and in ways that again reveal the depth of Jonas's own approach to these same issues. In contrast, Yaffe persuasively criticizes the deep inadequacy of efforts by deep ecologists such as Arne Naess to find radical environmentalism prefigured in Spinoza.

Just as it is a mistake to interpret Spinoza as a foundation for radical environmentalism, so too, argue both Yaffe and Troster, it is a mistake to construct any straightforward alliance between Jonas and non-anthropocentric environmentalism. Building on a distinction between citizenship and stewardship as articulated in the work of Hava Tirosh-Samuelson, Troster argues for a kind of dual aspect, pragmatic complementarity between Leopold's land ethic and Jonas's imperative of responsibility. While Leopold's land ethic has strong appeal among conservationists, it is unlikely to be acceptable as such to orthodox Jews. But Jonas's ethics of responsibility may help draw forth stewardship attitudes supportive of conservation practices. Without in any way challenging Troster's thesis, especially its potential for the promotion of an authentically Jewish environmentalism, it is nevertheless important to exercise caution when making appeal to the concept of responsibility.

"Responsibility" is a term that is often polymorphously employed to "ethicize" any human activity, including the activities of science and technology. Scientists can do virtually anything as long as they practice "ethically responsible science." Engineers are sometimes even said to have an ethical responsibility to manage the biosphere. Richard Wolin and others have cautioned against the political danger that some of Jonas's words may be used to justify anti-democratic authoritarianism. There are as well technocratic abuses implicit in arguments by those who do not read Jonas carefully enough so that they appeal to the concept of responsibility to defend proposals for the development of programs such as those of earth systems engineering and management.

The philosophical elaboration of responsibility can be traced back to Lucien Levy-Bruhl's treatise on *L'idée de responsabilité*.[5] For Levy-Bruhl, the history of philosophy reveals remarkable neglect of a principle basic to morality and ethical theory. The principle can be described as manifest in a variety of ways across the whole spectrum of reality. There is responsibility or responsiveness at the level of physical matter, as atoms and molecules interact or respond to each other. Living entities are further characterized by a distinctive kind of interaction or responsiveness to their environments and each other. It is in continuity with such metaphysical interpretations that Jonas subsequently explores the implications for science and technology. Yet the resulting notion of responsibility, as it emerges from the shadows in modern ethics, must be distinguished from that of social obligation or role responsibility, which can be traced back to Cicero's *De officiis* and has been the foundation of professional codes of conduct. Responsibility in Jonas's sense does not so much promote as delimit human action.

In considering possible alliances between the land ethic and the ethics of responsibility, Troster further observes a need to revise Leopold in a way that has general implications. Leopold's principle, act "to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community,"[6] appears at first to be able to complement Jonas's imperative of responsibility to preserve human and other life. But Leopold's formulation ceases to be binding once science itself reveals that nature itself lacks stability

[5] Lucien Levy-Bruhl, *L'idée de responsabilité* (Paris: Hachette, 1884).

[6] Aldo Leopold, "The Land Ethic," in *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1949), 201–26, here 224–25.

in any simple sense. That is, once the concept of nature as a complex and balanced harmony has been replaced, as it has in the science of ecology, by the concept of flux, the land ethic must be reformulated to something like, "Act to disturb the biotic community only at normal spatial and temporal scales."

But does this reformulation not call us up short, both rhetorically and philosophically? Does this not make the substantive meaning of "normal spatial and temporal scales" hostage to ever more scientific and technological research? Certainly this is what has happened in global climate change research, where the construction of global climate change models to determine the degree of anthropogenesis seems to have become as open ended as our consumption of new medical technologies. While environmentalists at least call for delimitations in the production and consumption of material commodities, no one seems able to challenge the infinite production and consumption of scientific knowledge. Again, "responsible" science—especially responsible technologized science, that is, science depending on advanced technological instrumentation—seems to know no bounds.

To conclude, let me honestly admit that, like Jonas in another context, I too am at once attracted and repulsed—excited and depressed—by some of the ideas and arguments presented, illuminated, criticized, and explored by these discussions of philosophical biology and environmentalism. Ideas are for me inherently exciting, yet I cannot help but wonder whether they are sufficient. At the risk of misunderstanding, let me try to formulate at least one aspect of my uneasiness or ambivalence pseudo *more geometrico*. (This uneasiness will immediately be recognized as echoing Yaffe's analysis of the dialectic between reason and feeling.)

First, human beings do not act on the basis of ideas alone. Whether formulated as a statement of psycho-physical parallelism or in more simple terms, the point is that ethical idealism is not enough. Lemma: Although some people are more idealistic than others—reflecting the Platonic philosophical distinction between the few and many—even for the idealistic few, physical force counts. So much is this the case that Yaffe, for instance, notes the difficulty in any Spinozistic psycho-physical parallelism of getting the psychic to fully parallel the physical in decision making and action determination.

Second, what Jonas most clearly develops is the idealist motivation of a heuristics of fear. He himself struggled at length with how to bring about a politically effective response to this fear. His struggles gave

rise to some of Jonas's most controversial criticisms of the impotence of democracy. Efforts to reinforce this psycho-mental philosophical motivation with religious dimensions—and not only within the Jewish community—remain problematic at best.

Thus, third, one cannot expect Jonas's heuristics of fear to effectively delimit the despoiling of nature both outside and inside us—that is, to provide anything more than idealistic guidance for either bioethics or environmentalism. The psycho-heuristics of fear will ever remain ineffective without the physical experience of the kind of disaster that the heuristics precisely aims to forestall.

In a world in which Thomas Friedman's active nihilistic celebration of the scientific and technological flattening of the world brings him celebrity status, one is both attracted and repulsed by the prospects for a plethora of disaster scenarios that engineers and policy workers actively aspire to manage.[7] What Ivan Illich refers to as "apocalyptic randiness" has become a permanent temptation of the high-tech human condition.[8] This is as true in popular culture, as witnessed by science fiction, as among those of us who remain deeply skeptical about Friedman's ever productionist future that would turn the world into an entrepreneurially engineered and managed artifact in which the good has become Ray Kurzweil's post-human, kabbalistic singularity.[9] To what extent might Jonas help us to understand and live in this world? Surely this is the ultimate challenge for anyone who would think after Jonas in relation to philosophical biology and environmentalism.

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[7] Thomas Friedman, *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005).

[8] Ivan Illich, "The Shadow Our Future Throws," in *At Century's End: Great Minds Reflect on Our Times*, ed. Nathan P. Gardels (La Jolla, CA: Alti, 1995), 68–83.

[9] Ray Kurzweil, *The Singularity Is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology* (New York: Viking, 2005).

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

MORE ON JONAS AND PROCESS PHILOSOPHY

Robert Cummings Neville

Sandra B. Lubarsky points out the close familiarity Hans Jonas had with Alfred North Whitehead's process philosophy. Most people who read Whitehead that closely become convinced Whiteheadians. Jonas did not, and neither did I. Lubarsky argues that Jonas should have, and probably soon will wish the same for me. Nevertheless, I want to point to three deficiencies in Whitehead's thought that might explain why Jonas did not go all the way with him, and also might cast some light on why Jonas took the independent line he did.

The first deficiency concerns Whitehead's theory of human subjective, conscious experience, a major topic for Lubarsky. Let me begin by clarifying a point in Whiteheadian metaphysics.[1] As has been pointed out, for Whitehead the fundamental unit of reality is what he called an actual entity, which has two sides or poles. One is that such an entity, which he also called an actual occasion or an event, is the subjective process of coming to be. Coming to be is a unity act that begins with a multiplicity of previous entities that have finished coming to be and ends with a new singular integration of those entities which, when finished, is available to enter into subsequent entities. The process of coming to be does not take place through time, but begins after past time has been set and results in a new space-time shaped entity. Whitehead called the process of coming to be "subjective" after the medieval usage meaning that the entity is a subject by and for itself. He called the finished product "objective" after the medieval usage meaning that the entity is an object for other entities, including other knowers. Aware that conscious human experience needs to be accounted for, and committed to conceptions of continuity in nature, Whitehead built into his theory of coming to be, or concrescence, much of what

[1] The points I make in this paper about Whitehead are to be found in his major work, *Process and Reality: An Essay in Cosmology*, corrected ed., ed. David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York: Free Press, 1978).

is needed for an account of human experience. For instance, coming to be is driven by an urge toward definiteness rather than the indefinite number of ways the initial conditions might be integrated; this is crucial for intentionality.

But in no way did Whitehead believe that any actual occasion or entity could be a human experience by itself. Rather, any instance of human experience involves interpretation or judgment—taking an object *as* something, and this requires a large sequence of actual occasions, not just one. Whitehead called such a sequence a "society" of actual occasions. In fact, human experience requires not just one society but a nest of such societies, ordered in special ways. For instance, there need to be societies drawing out all the trains of thought that come together in a single judgment, and there need to be skillions of societies (a skillion is a very large number) tracing causal inputs from the body, the atmosphere, gravitation, human culture, the *New York Times*, and whatever else provides the context for a single thought. Human thinking takes a lot of time and a lot of spatial causal connections. Moreover, Whitehead said that a judgment does not become conscious until it is so complex that it contrasts implicitly what it asserts—the object is *this*—with its negation—the object is *not that*. Consciousness has the complex logic of what he called an "affirmation-negation contrast."

So it was misleading of him to speak of the coming-to-be of a single actual occasion as mental or subjective in the sense that most of us, including Hans Jonas, would associate with human experience. Single actual entities can never be examples of human experience in the usual sense. Only complex, nested, societies of actual entities can be that, in Whitehead's view. Hans Jonas was exactly right to insist on an obdurate distinction between most of reality, which is brute, stubborn, material, and inertially driven, and the precious part of reality that is experiential in the sense best summed up in human consciousness and affective feelings. At some point, there must be gradations from one to the other—Whitehead and Jonas would agree on that. But most of reality is not subjective in the sense of human experience, and the subjectivity of human experience has traits that simply are not to be found in most of the rest of reality, traits that need to be identified and prized.

Now, the deficiency of Whitehead's theory is that he did not sufficiently explore the gradation from the physical world to the mental world. Perhaps he was deceived by his own language that attributed subjectivity to occasions in rocks and in the trajectories of quantum

particles. What Whiteheadians need to do is to trace how the various kinds of causality in the human organism and its cultural setting can take on the patterns of semiotics.[2] The causality involved in digestion and muscular contraction has little if any semiotic structure. The causality involved in human subjective experience, in thinking and feeling, has the semiotic structure of interpretation, with codes of signs, intentions, hopes, fears, and more free choice than we know how to be responsible for. Other animals have varying degrees of semiotic causation in their behavior, and can indeed be said to think, even to communicate. But only human beings, so far as we know, can do metaphysics and enjoy operas. The semiotics that process philosophy needs can come from Charles S. Peirce's pragmatic theory, and it can be related to current scientific inquiry in neurophysiology, anthropology, and literary theory. Whitehead did not have that semiotic resource for distinguishing non-thinking and non-feeling nature from thinking and feeling in the senses associated with human experience. Jonas was wise not to buy in to process philosophy's confidence that it had solved the mind-body problem.

The second deficiency in Whitehead's view is that his conception of God is simply unworkable.[3] According to Whitehead, God is a single actual entity whose internal time is everlasting. God is never finished concrescing or coming to be. But then God is never finished enough to be prehended or felt by any finite entity. Like any finite entity, God's process of coming to be is utterly isolated from anything else coming to be; only after the entity has finished coming to be is it objective to be prehended into a subsequent entity. God cannot be prehended so as to persuade finite entities, as his theory would like, because God is never finished to be prehended. Whitehead's pupil, Charles Hartshorne, realized this and changed the conception of God.[4] Hartshorne said God is not one actual entity but a society of entities, each of which has the

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[2] I have done something like this in my trilogy, *The Axiology of Freedom*, which consists of *Reconstruction of Thinking* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1981), *Recovery of the Measure* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989), and *Normative Cultures* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995), all of which discuss Whitehead's ideas extensively.

[3] My arguments in this regard are developed in detail in my *Creativity and God: A Challenge to Process Theology*, new ed. (1980; Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995).

[4] See Charles Hartshorne, *The Divine Relativity: A Social Conception of God* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948).

capacity to surpass the one before by virtue of integrating that with what has happened recently in the rest of the world. The trouble with Hartshorne's view is that there is no reason why a subsequent divine entity needs to surpass a previous one—it might simply screw up and lose the value of its predecessors. Hartshorne said that entities in the divine society are metaphysically obliged to surpass the past without loss of value, but there can be no metaphysical ground for that necessity outside of the concrete entities that might in fact screw up. So, for all the poetic, evocative attractiveness of process theology, representing God as the fellow sufferer who feels our pain and wishes he could do something about it, the conception of God is simply incoherent philosophically. Jonas was right not to go all the way with Whitehead.

Now I suspect that Jonas's hesitance about Whitehead stemmed from discomfort with the clarity with which Whitehead and Hartshorne said that God is an entity alongside other entities, connected by creativity that is supposed to allow both interaction but also the interior isolation of each entity from the other. Although God, for process philosophy, is infinitely inventive in ways by which parts of the divine self can be integrated, God still is finite with regard to being limited by other beings outside the divine self, and with regard to being unable to influence anything else except through attempts to suggest superior paths for other entities that they are free to reject. Process theology explicitly rejects divine creation in any sense beyond being the source for order, the response to which is up to the other entities. Hans Jonas saw something deep and undeniable in the ancient theme of divine creation.

This brings me to the third deficiency in Whitehead's theory, namely with regard to the problem of the one and the many. One of Whitehead's most important ideas—for which reason I call myself a Whiteheadian—is what he labeled the "ontological principle." That is the principle that any complex thing—an actual entity, a society, or whatever—is to be understood by tracking down the decisions that have gone into making it what it is. The decisions are to be found in both the many occasions in antecedent lines of causation and in the spontaneous creativity within the coming to be of occasions. All decisions take place in the coming to be of occasions either now or in the past when past occasions came to be. The important point is the emphasis on decision as that which explains. Antecedent states of affairs never explain how something new comes to be, although they enter into those explanations. Only decisions explain. This is the genius of Whitehead's conception of creativity. The entire explanatory apparatus of *Process and Reality* was

geared to locating various kinds of decision points. But Whitehead never applied the ontological principle to the problem of how the metaphysical complexity of the world itself is to be understood. How are there complexes of metaphysical principles? Why is there a creative process of entities integrating past entities and adding themselves as one more to the many? Whitehead simply did not ask that question, and did not realize the power in his ontological principle when it comes to the existence of anything at all.

Permit me to suggest, albeit briefly, that the best solution to the problem of the one and many is that anything that is determinate at all is one of the many and that the many determinate things are simply created together in an ontological act of creation.[5] To be determinate, a thing needs conditional features by which it is determinate with respect to anything else. Whitehead's theory of creativity linking entities through prehensions is a theory of conditional features. To be determinate, a thing also needs what I call essential features, by virtue of which it integrates its conditional features into a singular entity with existential location. Whitehead's theory of coming to be is about essential features. Whitehead recognized that entities in relation need both prehension of one another and also spontaneous coming to be. But he did not realize that conditional features are impossible without essential features immediately present, and vice versa. He put the conditional features in the state of finished objectivity and the essential ones in the state of coming to be. Yet, two entities cannot be related through prehensions unless they are also together in terms of their essential features. For Whitehead, the comings to be are utterly alone and isolated from one another. There must be a deeper context of ontological mutual relevance in which the essential features, the spontaneities, of different entities can be together so that their causal conditionings are possible. That deeper context cannot be another entity, because an infinite regress of deeper grounds would break out. That deeper context can only be an ontological act that has no determinate character of itself apart from what it acquires in creating the determinate things.

I suggest that God as creator *ex nihilo* be conceived as the ontological ground of the many. We might accept Whitehead's account of how

[5] This argument is made at stupefying length in my *God the Creator: On the Transcendence and Presence of God*, new ed. (1968; Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992).

the world works, with its combination of determination and freedom, but we should see that as resting on a non-temporal, eternal, immense, creative ontological act. God is that act considered as given a nature by being the creator of this world, as exercising the power of creation or decision in the eternal creative act, and as the abyss which is nothing from which every determinate thing comes. This is an extremely austere conception of God, denying of God any intrinsic traits. But then God is not a thing alongside others. The medievals knew this in saying that God is not in a genus, nor is God a genus per se. God is the source of things and alongsideness and endurance and change.

The religious consequence of this view of God as creator is that we can say precious little about such a God's nature save through myths and likely stories by which we project affairs of the spatio-temporal world onto God. This is precisely what Hans Jonas did, with a clear apprehension that he was not doing literal metaphysics. He was myth-making, because only in mythmaking and other symbolic activities can we grasp God in religiously helpful ways. My own theological project is to combine the austere metaphysics of God as the act of creation that becomes determinate in what it does with a strong thesis that symbolism is what engages us with realities, not what substitutes for them.[6] So the symbolism of biblical and midrashic literature, while not to be taken as literal description, is to be taken as effective engagement whereby, over time, living with that symbolism attunes us to pick up on what is valuable in God and religious matters.

Lubarsky raises the important question of power in our understanding of God. She contrasts physical with spiritual or mental power on Whiteheadian grounds and accuses Jonas of slipping into a physical or materialistic notion of power too often. The opposite danger, which she also wants to avoid, is to slip into an idealistic panpsychism on Whiteheadian or Hartshornean terms. I agree with Jonas and Plato that power means making a difference to something else. In the case of things in the world, power means causing them to be something they would not be otherwise. Giving people ideas is one kind of power, one that works because of the intricate complexity of our semiotic systems. But there are other kinds of power that need to be acknowledged and

[6] See my *On the Scope and Truth of Theology: Theology as Symbolic Engagement* (New York: T&T Clark, 2006).

not marginalized by some metaphysical claim that entities are always responsible for what they do with what they are given. Brute force is real and brute. Inertial forces sweep individual self-assertions aside. Genetic structure sets absolute limits to biological change. Unless we acknowledge this, we are foolish and cannot prepare to do our best. In the face of this heavy-duty implacability of natural forces, it makes good sense to say that the precious, fragile, integrity of the human spirit needs high courage and stubbornness to assert itself into existence. A plant survives in the forest by struggling against the paw that pushes it down, the cold that stops its circulation, and the nutrients whose inertial force is to sink rather than to be drawn up into the xylem of life. It uses its power to make things do what they otherwise would not do, which is Aristotle's definition of violence. We can restate the point in terms of co-opting harmonies into better harmonies, but that still is violence to what things would be absent the agent asserting itself.

God is a special case. God's creative action, self-assertion, and self-definition as creator simply make things new. It faces no opposition, for it creates anything that might oppose anything else. Instead of saying that God has no power because God forces nothing on an alien being, I would be happy to say that God has infinite, that is, unopposed, power because God creates anything that might have character over against something else with character. So I believe Jonas was premature in attacking omnipotence: he was caught by the symbols that represent God as another being who needs opposition in order to affirm the divine nature. He was on the mark, however, in seeing the immanence of God in everything that exists and takes place in the world. For it all is a consequence and part of the terminus of the divine creative act.

So in the case of the Shoah, or Katrina, or the Pakistan earthquake, or the Indian Ocean tsunami, or the Rwandan genocide, or the Armenian genocide, or the Lisbon earthquake, or the Black Death, or the forced diaspora after the Bar Kochba revolt, or after the destruction of the Second Temple, or the First Temple, or after Noah's flood that killed all those animals and innocent children, we have to say that the divine nature is morally mixed if moral at all. Job was asked where we might stand in order to judge God as a moral being. Nowhere! Surely we cannot assert that God in some un-relation to the world has a morally good nature that necessitates a morally good creation. That hypothesis has no credibility. But then, the hypothesis that God has some intrinsic nature in un-relation to the world has no biblical

credibility either—God is only mentioned in relation to the world. Nor does it allow of a solution to the problem of the one and many except by positing something more basic than God plus the world. Hans Jonas danced nimbly around these mistakes. Yet he sustained the theological task of saying something about God that is not reducible to what we ordinarily say about the world. For this I salute him.

HANS JONAS: LIFE AND WORKS

Christian Wiese

1903 On May 10, Hans Jonas is born in Mönchengladbach, Germany, one of three sons of Gustav Jonas, the owner of a textile company, and of Rosa Horowitz, the daughter of the Krefeld chief rabbi, Jakob Horowitz.

1916 Death of his younger brother Ludwig; Jonas's bar mitzvah.

1918 After the revolution of 1918–1919, Jonas embraces Zionism and becomes—against his father's will—a member of a Zionist circle in Mönchengladbach. In the coming years he is strongly influenced by the Zionist youth movement and by Martin Buber's cultural Zionism.

1921 Baccalaureate (*Abitur*) at the Gymnasium of Mönchengladbach. During the summer, Jonas starts studying philosophy and art history at the University of Freiburg; his teachers are Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, and Jonas Cohn. First encounter with Karl Löwith. Jonas becomes a member of the Zionist student organizsation IVRIA. In the winter term he moves to Berlin, where he studies philosophy at the Friedrich Wilhelms University in Berlin (with, among others, Eduard Spranger, Ernst Troeltsch, Hugo Gressmann, Ernst Sellin, and Eduard Meyer) and Jewish studies at the Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums (with Julius Guttmann, Harry Torczyner, and Eduard Baneth). Friendship with Leo Strauss and Günther Stern (Anders). Involvement in the Zionist student corporation Makkabäa as well as in the Kartell Jüdischer Verbindungen (KJV).

1922 Jonas publishes the Zionist article "Die Idee der Zerstreuung und Wiedersammlung bei den Propheten" ("The Idea of Dispersion and Ingathering in the Prophets"), in which he provides a national-religious interpretation of the prophetic message and attempts to establish a religious-historical foundation for Zionism.

1923 From March to October, Jonas undergoes vocational training in agriculture (organized by the Zionist Hachsharah organization), in order to prepare himself for emigration to Palestine. After having decided to continue his studies in Germany, he spends the academic year 1923/24 in Freiburg.

1924 In the winter term, Jonas moves to the University of Marburg, in order to continue studying with Martin Heidegger. Apart from Heidegger, the Protestant New Testament scholar Rudolf Bultmann becomes his most important and influential teacher. This period also sees the beginning of his lifelong friendship with Hannah Arendt. Together with her he joins the circle of Heidegger's students (among them Gerhard Nebel, Karl Löwith, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Gerhard Krüger, and Günther Stern). Inspired by Bultmann, he starts his studies on ancient Gnosticism. After his decision to start Ph.D. studies, he spends time at Heidelberg, Bonn, and Frankfurt University.

1928 Jonas returns to Marburg and successfully submits his Ph.D. thesis on "Der Begriff der Gnosis" (The Concept of Gnosticism), which had been supervised by Heidegger. In the winter term 1928/29 he studies at the Sorbonne in Paris.

1930 *Der Begriff der Gnosis: Inaugural-Dissertation zur Erlangung der Doktorwürde der Hohen Philosophischen Fakultät der Philipps-Universität zu Marburg*; publication of *Augustin und das paulinische Freiheitsproblem: Ein philosophischer Beitrag zur Genesis der christlich-abendländischen Freiheitsidee*. Until 1933 Jonas undertakes private studies in Cologne,

Frankfurt, and Heidelberg, where he belongs to the intellectual circle established by the sociologist Karl Mannheim. Friendship with Dolf Sternberger. Plan to submit a *Habilitation* thesis and preparation for an activity as *Privatdozent*.

1933 Hitler's "seizure of power." In view of the anti-Jewish boycott in April 1933 and the initial stages of the persecution of German Jewry, Jonas decides to leave Germany. In August 1933, Jonas emigrates to London, where he prepares his book on Gnosticism for publication. Research visits to the Netherlands, Switzerland, and Paris (visiting Hannah Arendt and Günther Anders).

1934 *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist. Erster Teil: Die mythologische Gnosis.*

1935 Jonas arrives in Palestine at Passover. Beginning of his friendship with Gershom Scholem, Hans Lewy, Hans-Jakob Polotsky, George Lichtheim, and Shmuel Sambursky—all of them members of the "Pilegesh" circle, a male intellectual discussion group.

1936 Jonas's parents visit him in Jerusalem. In view of the strengthening of the Arab insurgency against the Zionist settlement policy Jonas volunteers for the *Haganah*, at the same time being a member of the Brit Shalom-movement.

1937 First encounter with Eleonore (Lore) Weiner, his future wife. In the autumn, Jonas spends time on the isle of Rhodes, working on the second part of his book on Gnosticism.

1938 In January, Jonas learns about the death of his father from cancer. Return to Jerusalem. After the *Kristallnacht* pogrom in November 1938, Rosa Jonas transfers her immigration certificate for Palestine to her son Georg, who had been sent to Dachau. The increasing obstacles to Jewish immigration to Palestine prevents her from fleeing from Germany. Jonas becomes a part-time lecturer at the Hebrew University, where he delivers an academic memorial lecture on the occasion of Edmund Husserl's death.

1939 Immediately after the outbreak of World War II, Jonas publishes a dramatic appeal to the Palestinian youth to fight against Nazi Germany ("Unsere Teilnahme an diesem Kriege: Ein Wort an jüdische Männer") and volunteers for the British army.

1940 Jonas trains in the British training camp Sarafand, becoming a member of the British army's First Palestine Anti-Aircraft Battery and participating in the defense of Haifa against air strikes from Damascus and Beirut.

1942 Deportation of Jonas's mother to the Ghetto of Lodz, later on to Auschwitz, where she is murdered.

1943 Jonas marries Lore Weiner in Haifa.

1944 Jonas becomes a member of the newly formed Jewish Brigade Group. Training in Alexandria; from there he is deployed to Southern Italy. During this time, he writes his "Lehrbriefe" (lessons taught in letters) to his wife, in which he develops the nucleus of his new philosophy of biology. The same year he publishes his essay on "Jewish and Christian Elements in the Western Philosophical Tradition."

1945 In July, Jonas comes to Germany with his unit as part of the Allied armies. Return to Mönchengladbach, where he learns about the murder of his mother. Journeys to Göttingen, Marburg, and Heidelberg—encounters with Karl Jaspers and Rudolf Bultmann. In November, Jonas returns to Palestine to rejoin his wife and restart his academic career.

1946 Jonas moves with his wife to the Arabic village Issawiye and works as a part-time lecturer at the Hebrew University and the English Council of Higher Studies in Jerusalem. There are, however, no prospects of being offered a chair in philosophy.

1948 Establishment of the State of Israel and outbreak of the War of Independence. Jonas moves to Jerusalem and is drafted into the Israeli army. Death of Lore's brother Franz Weiner during military action near Jenin. Birth of their daughter Ayalah.

1949 After having been granted a leave of absence from military service and receiving a fellowship from the Lady Davis Foundation, Jonas moves to Canada together with his family and teaches philosophy at Dawson College, a department of McGill University in Montreal.

1950/51 Jonas is appointed visiting professor and, later, associate professor of philosophy at Carleton College in Ottawa. Birth of his and Lore's son, Jonathan. Friendship with Ludwig von Bertallanfy and journeys to New York, Chicago and Cincinnati. Renewed encounter with Hannah Arendt, Günther Anders and Karl Löwith.

1952 Jonas turns down the offer of a chair in philosophy at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem because of the prevailing living conditions. Discussions with Gershom Scholem about his alleged "betrayal of Zionism." First journey to Europe after the war, and participation at an international conference on philosophy in Brussels. Encounters with Hans Blumenberg. He publishes his essay "Gnosticism and Modern Nihilism."

1954 *Gnosis und spätantiker Geist. Teil II, 1: Von der Mythologie zur mystischen Philosophie.*

1955 Birth of Jonas's and Lore's daughter Gabrielle. Appointment as professor of philosophy at the New School for Social Research in New York (where Jonas teaches until 1976; during this period he also teaches as visiting professor at Princeton University, Columbia University, and the University of Chicago). Jonas moves to New Rochelle, New York. Friendship with Kurt and Nelly Friedrichs and with Wilhelm and Trude Magnus. In New York, Jonas belongs to the circle of friends of Hannah Arendt and Heinrich Blücher (to which, among others, Adolph Lowe, Aron Gurwitsch, and Paul Tillich belong as well).

1956 Jonas turns down an offer from the University of Kiel.

1958 *The Gnostic Religion: The Message of the Alien God and the Beginnings of Christianity.* A lecture on "The Practical Uses of Theory" at the New School marks the beginning of Jonas's engagement with the challenge of modern technology.

1959/60 Jonas spends his sabbatical in Munich and lectures at different German universities.

1960 Jonas turns down the offer of a chair in philosophy at the University of Marburg because he does not feel he could return to Germany on a permanent basis.

1961 Ingersoll Lecture at the School of Divinity, Harvard University, on "Immortality and the Modern Temper."

1962 Jonas is awarded an honorary doctorate from the Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati.

1963 Jonas breaks with Hannah Arendt because of her book on the Eichmann trial and her public attack on Gershom Scholem; a reconciliation takes place only two years later. Publication of *Zwischen Nichts und Ewigkeit: Zur Lehre vom Menschen.*

1964 Jonas's philosophical attack against his former teacher in his lecture on "Heidegger and Theology" at Drew University in New Jersey becomes a public sensation in the U.S. as well as in Germany, where he repeats his lecture at several universities.

1965/66 Jonas participates at the New York conference on "The Ferment in Contemporary Theology" and encounters the Christian "Death of God Theology"; visiting professor at Harvard University.

1967 Jonas's lecture on "Philosophical Reflections upon Experiments with Human Subjects" at the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in Boston marks his increased interest in specific bioethical topics such as brain death and organ transplantation.

1968 Jonas publishes his essay on "Contemporary Problems in Ethics from a Jewish Perspective."

1969 Jonas becomes a founding fellow of the interdisciplinary Hastings Center. Brief meeting and "reconciliation" with Martin Heidegger in Zurich.
1970 *Wandel und Bestand: Vom Grunde der Verstehbarkeit des Geschichtlichen.*
1973 *Organismus und Freiheit: Ansätze zu einer philosophischen Biologie.* Jonas participates in a conference on Gnosticism in Stockholm.
1974 *Philosophical Essays: From Ancient Creed to Technical Man.*
1975 Hannah Arendt's death. Jonas delivers a moving speech at her memorial service ("Hannah Arendt, 1906–1975").
1976 Honorary doctorate of the Protestant Theology department of the University of Marburg. Speech at the memorial service for Rudolf Bultmann in Marburg ("Im Kampf um die Möglichkeit des Glaubens: Erinnerungen an Rudolf Bultmann und Betrachtungen zum philosophischen Aspekt seines Werkes"). After his retirement, Jonas works on his new philosophical approach to ethics and ecology.
1978 *On Faith, Reason, and Responsibility: Six Essays.* Jonas participates in a panel with Gilles Quispel at a conference on Gnosticism at Yale University.
1979 Jonas's book, *Das Prinzip Verantwortung: Versuch einer Ethik für die technologische Zivilisation*, becomes an overwhelming success in Germany.
1981 *Macht oder Ohnmacht der Subjektivität? Das Leib-Seele-Problem im Vorfeld des Prinzips Verantwortung.*
1982/83 Holds the Eric Vögelin Guest Professorship at the Ludwig Maximilians University in Munich.
1984 Jonas receives the Leopold Lucas Prize of the Department of Protestant Theology at the University of Tübingen. On this occasion he delivers his lecture *Der Gottesbegriff nach Auschwitz: Eine jüdische Stimme* ("The Concept of God after Auschwitz: A Jewish Voice," published in English in 1987). *The Imperative of Responsibility: In Search of an Ethics for the Technological Age.*
1985 *Technik, Medizin, und Ethik: Zur Praxis des Prinzips Verantwortung.*
1987 Jonas is awarded the Peace Prize of the German Book Trade and becomes an honorary citizen of his native town Mönchengladbach. *Wissenschaft als persönliches Erlebnis: Drei Reden.*
1988 *Materie, Geist, und Schöpfung: Kosmologischer Befund und kosmogonische Vermutung.*
1990 Honorary doctorate from the University of Bamberg.
1991 Honorary doctorate from the University of Konstanz.
1992 Honorary doctorate from the Free University of Berlin.
1992 *Philosophische Untersuchungen und metaphysische Vermutungen.* Jonas participates in a conference on his philosophy in Jerusalem.
1993 *Philosophie: Rückschau und Vorschau am Ende des Jahrhunderts.* On January 30, Jonas receives the Premio Nonino in Urbino, Italy. Upon his return to the U.S., he dies on February 5 in New Rochelle. He is buried in the Jewish part of the ecumenical cemetery of Hastings, New York.

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